

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN:
A CHURCH BASED TRAINING PROGRAM

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To my loving and devoted wife Megan and our eight wonderful children Katie, Peter, Emma, Molly, Nate, Baleigh, Stephen, and Taylor. Without your testimonies of faith in Christ this project would not be possible.

To God be The Glory!

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ABSTRACT

Considering the steady moral decline in late modern America the need for a Bible based, thorough, and systematic approach to parenting has become of paramount importance. With this need in mind the Nine Practices of The Proactive Parent was developed to address the moral vacuum caused by the lack of a comprehensive character-driven approach to parenting. This writers observations were gleaned from personal experience, interaction with parents through counseling, teaching opportunities, and in-depth study of well-known parenting experts.

As a result, the Nine Practices of The Proactive Parent was developed and implemented with positive results. These results were gathered and calculated through post-course critiques and follow-on counseling. The results have been of consistent high quality. As parents developed a higher level of character-health in their own lives, the resulting impact was more recognizable character-health in their children. As groups of parents implemented the principles together, the resulting outcome was character-healthy families, churches, and developing communities.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 1998, Tom Brokaw introduced his best selling book “The Greatest Generation.”¹ In this book, he detailed the conflict that shaped the World War II generation. Theirs was a struggle against flesh and blood that spanned the globe, and without their sacrifice the twentieth century might have looked vastly different. They seemed to be selfless individuals who had the highest regard for moral decency and though some at the time questioned if they had the moral fiber to defeat the Axis, in the final analysis, they did. They stood against tyranny and stood for honor, courage, and commitment, but where did they develop such moral fortitude? Was their character developed on the battlefield or was it simply revealed and refined there? What was present in their character development that now seems to be missing in the character education of children today? What role did their parents play in their character development? What role does the church play in assisting parents to raise children with moral and ethical fortitude? In postmodern America is it even possible for parents, and the church, to shape the character of children and young adults? In other words, what will it take to shape the next greatest generation?

In 1999, only one year after the release of Mr. Brokaw’s book, the nation was stunned by the actions of two morally bankrupt youths in Littleton, Colorado. Two assassins stalked Columbine High School, randomly killing teachers and fellow students alike, propelled by the rush of voyeuristic sadism. Sadly, school shootings have become

¹ Tom Brokaw, The Greatest Generation (New York: Random House, 1998).

so common today that the general public doesn't even notice if and when they make the news, begging the question, what has happened to make us so aloof? Events like the Columbine massacre, serve to highlight the steep moral decline that has taken place since the 1940's. Rapidly declining standards present a problem for us today in America. Has the Christian family become like the frog in the pot, unaware that the slowly rising temperature is about to cook them alive? Ultimately, Christian parents must ask the question: what will the next generation look like and who, or what, will shape that generation?

In 2008, world financial markets collapsed and bellwethers such as Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers disappeared. The unthinkable was happening right before everyone's eyes. Retirement nest eggs, 401(k)s, and property values plummeted. The only fiscal category seemingly left untouched was executive bonuses. Collectively, the world was getting a glimpse at what the present generation looks like, the children and grandchildren of the World War II generation.

In 2010, moral and ethical indifference abound. In his new book Revolutionary Parenting, George Barna details the problem. His research shows that only one in three Christian children are biblically literate, only one in five share their faith with others, and not even half state that their religious faith is very important in their lives. Parents are to blame, according to Barna,

In addition, consider that fewer than one out of every five parents of young children believe they are doing a good job of training their children morally and spiritually. In fact, when we asked a national sample of adults with children under eighteen to rate their parenting performance on fifteen different indicators, we discovered that parents ranked their efforts related to

morality and spirituality at the bottom of the list. What does all of this add up to? A Crisis.²

The world has seen the collapse of global financial markets, swelling unemployment, bankruptcies and foreclosures, and out-of-control government spending seemingly propelled by greed, lust, arrogance and irresponsibility. The problem of declining moral standards, according to many, has reached crisis proportions. The world today is vastly different from the 1940s' world that spawned the last greatest generation, yet we find ourselves in a situation similar to theirs. The 1920s were a decade of excesses, seemingly propelled by greed, lust, arrogance, and irresponsibility, followed by the financial collapse and the Great Depression of the 1930s. However, faced with huge cultural obstacles, the parents of that era managed to instill high standards of virtue into their children, setting the stage for the crucible of the 1940s. Today, parents face monumental obstacles of global proportion, which only serve to underscore the need for the next greatest generation. Morally upright and ethically empowered behavior has never been more important than it is today, just ask the former employees of Enron, Tyco, or Lehman Brothers. Like that of the World War II generation, the current struggle is not against uniformed militias alone, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12). Like the World War II generation, the battlefield for today's youth is also spiritual, the enemy is supernatural, and the weapons to combat the enemy are moral in nature. The next generation will have to be morally strong, spiritually solid and biblically competent. So, who will train the next greatest generation of character-healthy leaders? For the purposes of this paper, character-healthy leaders will be defined

² George Barna, Revolutionary Parenting (Carol Stream: BarnaBooks, 2007), 8-10.

as that young adult who is consistently characterized by demonstrating behavior congruent with all nine of the biblical character marks that will be detailed later in this chapter.

It is this writer's contention that the burden and responsibility for this training falls to parents of every stripe. Christian parents especially, must shape the character of their own children. Romans 12:2 reminds parents that the fundamental questions of life must be redefined to meet biblical standards, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is good and acceptable and perfect."³ Sadly, some young parents face a glaring need to be introduced to those important questions of life that seem to have been tossed aside in today's feelings driven world. Recognizing their own moral bankruptcy is an important first step for most parents who desire to raise the moral standard in their own homes. In order to understand the need, parents must learn to ask the right questions. Too often, they ask the wrong questions, listen poorly to the answers, and act impetuously on that bad data. For instance, many parents have missed the subtle shift in the American culture over the past forty years. Young people are asking different questions these days, not just expressing the same old questions in their own slang like previous generations. Since World War II, the basic question of life has changed from why? to why not?. David Wells describes the shift this way,

The moral axis in life has collapsed and has been replaced by the assumption that each person must be his or her own person, must pursue one's uniqueness, must realize oneself, must make of oneself what one can, and must buy whatever will bring him or her to these ends... This transformation has gathered momentum since the 1970's and it is now what characterizes our public discussion. The "public display of one's wrongs,

³ All Biblical citations are taken from the NASB unless otherwise indicated.

one's pitiableness, one's misfortunes, which would have seemed shameful, ignoble, even disgusting before World War II, became in the 1970's the distinctive American style.⁴

Wells goes on to explain that the shift in the American moral landscape during the past forty years has manifested itself in such a way that the majority of Americans are no longer concerned with why something is the way it is, or why a person should behave a certain way. The new moral landscape has each individual concerned exclusively with the notion of "what's in it for me?" Why not? is the new refrain of the postmodern American. After all, if it feels good...do it. This shift is profound. It is this writer's observation, that most people are asking the why not? question in these times. While some American parents and young people continue seeking the answer to the why? questions of life, far too many have crossed over. These two questions could not be more diametrically opposed. This talking at cross-purposes has created confusion at work, home, and in our communities.

I once worked for a Navy Captain who was in charge of about 2500 personnel, and I was an executive on his staff. One day, I was in the Captain's office discussing a project we were working on together, when I noticed he looked visibly discouraged. I inquired, and he confirmed my suspicions. He went on to tell me about two service members that he fired earlier in the day. It seems that this young married couple were the parents of a nine-month old child, whom they decided to leave unattended while they went out to dinner and shopping. Once the parents left for the evening, the child began to cry. The crying became so loud, that the neighbors knocked on the door, only to learn that no adult was at home. After a forced entry, the fire department, police department

⁴ David F. Wells, Above All Earthly Powers: Christ in a Postmodern World (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 52.

and Navy security waited for the young parents to return. Upon their arrival the young parents were dumbfounded. “What’s the big deal?” was their response... “after all, everybody else leaves their children unattended and besides, the baby is fine.” That evening began a three-month process for them that included counseling, external discipline, and even remedial parenting help. Sadly, over the months, they never took responsibility for their actions and continually showed no signs of change. By the time they made it to the Captain, his hands were tied and he had no choice but to release them from active duty with an “Other-than-honorable” discharge, and it broke his heart to do so.

As the Captain explained the circumstance of their departure to me that day in his office, I listened carefully and heard a pattern emerge that was familiar. The Captain must have asked the why? question ten times or more. “Why would they leave a child at home unattended? Why would they not own up to their actions when confronted with the issue? Why weren’t they more responsible? Why, why, why,” he asked. I guess I began to smirk a bit, because my boss stopped in mid sentence and asked me why I was smiling at him. My response was simple, “Captain, you’re asking the wrong question. In the last thirty years the fundamental question of our culture has changed from why? to why, not? Captain, you’re seeking an answer to a different question.” The young Navy couple was motivated by the why not? paradigm. They were asking a completely different question of themselves and others. Those asking the why? questions of life find it very difficult to make sense out of today’s world. They scratch their heads and wag their fingers to no avail. What’s going on around them just doesn’t seem to make sense any more.

This shift in thinking is profound and has had a slow and progressively deteriorating effect on children's character, like the frog in the pot. The why not? generation no longer considers the moral merit involved in the decision-making process, but instead reacts impetuously, driven by feelings and emotions, disregarding the virtue or values at stake. They would rather ask why not? instead of why?. Their behavioral model is motivated by whether they "can" or "can't" do something, instead of whether they "should" or "shouldn't" do something. This highly reactive behavior has culminated in a generation of finger pointing blame assessors, unwilling to take responsibility for their own actions and attitudes. These young parents then have difficulty with moral and Biblical absolutes. Their tendency is to create a situational ethic where none is warranted, This moral slide did not happen overnight, but developed gradually, over time. C.S. Lewis warned about the eventual moral decay that would result from such ethical relativism as early as 1953. Lewis was concerned that "value judgments" would lead to an ethic where each parent and young person ultimately followed only his or her feelings when making a decision of a moral nature and that such thinking would lead to a chaotic society.⁵ Lewis's warning about feelings driven reactivity was in full bloom by 1969. A 1969 Louis Harris poll, regarding changing morality in America, was published in Time magazine. The article described the prevailing moral changes taking root in the post World War II generation, "in a moral crisis, most people say they depend on their feelings to be their guide rather than any external authority... Increasingly, following one's own bent openly and unapologetically has become a criterion of moral conduct."⁶

⁵ C.S. Lewis, The Abolition of Man (New York: Macmillan, 1953), 16.

⁶ "Changing Morality: The Two Americas a Time- Louis Harris Poll," *Time Magazine*, Jun. 6, 1969: 26-27.

Fifty-six years later, the Barna research group confirmed Lewis's fear about the potential consequences of modern moral and ethical relativism,

Most parents are focused on the wrong standards of success and are willing either to settle for what their well-intentioned, but ill-informed efforts produce or to deny that there is any problem to address. As a result, our children are suffering in various dimensions of life, but especially in the spiritual dimension. This *crisis* [italics mine] is seriously undermining the potential of our next generation to become spiritual champions.⁷

Lewis warned about it, Harris quantified it, Wells named it, Barna researched it and all of these men came to the same conclusion; the rapid decline of moral and ethical standards in Postmodern America has led to a character crisis.

The direction of my life changed that day in the Captain's office. He asked me to write a course of study that would help teach into the moral decay of our times and also help parents to once again connect their children with the why? questions of life. This writer set out that day to influence a culture for Christ. God has not given up on this generation yet, nor should parents and children give up on him, or themselves, for that matter. For the past nine years I have taught this course to sailors on Navy bases all over the world; to parents at conferences all over the world; to singles, church goers and non-church goers of all ages and backgrounds; to more than ten thousand people; and the response I have witnessed has been overwhelming. It was clear to the vast majority of the training participants, that Bible-based character training is essential to reverse the moral decline of American culture. It seems clear that the duty falls to Christian parents. Parents, with the assistance of the church, must combat their culture and do a better job of training the next generation, and they should do so with a sense of urgency.

⁷ Barna, Revolutionary Parenting, xxii.

Barna describes the need for more church based parenting help when he writes;

I have become convinced that the spiritual war occurring in individual lives is pretty much won or lost by the age of thirteen. What parents do with their youngsters prior to the teen years is of paramount importance to the Kingdom of God on earth. Not to get dramatic, but I sensed an obligation to offer even a minute amount of assistance to the beleaguered parents of our country.⁸

He goes on to say that such assistance is best directed from church based training programs. Barna adds yet another important consideration for parents to ponder. He insists that proper parenting should be about character development not just resume' building,

What specific outcomes are you (the parent) committed to facilitating in your child's life? We'll talk more about them, but the coach-parent who lacks clear goals for his or her child is not likely to achieve desirable results... Our research found that parents are more likely to raise spiritual champions if they accept the fact that from day one their parenting efforts will stray from the norm and will put them at odds with parents who are pursuing a more conventional approach.⁹

How does this present generation of parents, who themselves have grown up with the why not? question, re-learn and pass on to their children the character qualities needed to meet the demands of a generation in free fall? It seems the answer to this question can only be found in extensive, systematic and intensely practical church-based character training. Only as we teach back into the why? questions of life, will we again see young people willing to make hard, character based choices. Choices such as "what is right in this situation?" rather than, "what is the easiest thing to do in this situation?" or "what should be done in this situation?" rather than, "what makes me feel good for the moment?" Parents and children will not gain the knowledge to make these hard choices on their own, instead they must take advantage of the best character training materials

⁸ Barna, Revolutionary Parenting, xxi.

⁹ Barna, Revolutionary Parenting, 18, 29.

available to persistently and consistently teach the virtues and values necessary to live a God-honoring life.

As early as 1962, already seeing our present moral and spiritual slide, Dr. Richard Taylor described the need for parents to become more proactive in directing their children's behavior this way,

The absence of restraint is not producing better citizens, and that same blending of liberty and law must be applied at all ages. Highways must have boundaries as well as vistas. Freedom to roam the country must not be the freedom to climb fences and tread down vegetable patches. Responsible parents see this, and are coming to see also that some way must be found to help children see it too, *and see it at a very early age.*¹⁰

Dr. Taylor is correct. Structured boundaries need to be in place for parents to raise children of deep and abiding character. Ideally, those boundaries are based upon the Word of God, taught by the parents, and reinforced by the church.

This writer has identified nine Biblical precepts that are key to developing the proper Biblical character development of children. These nine marks will help Christian parents develop children with strong moral character.

Mark #1 is: The Practice of Modeling.

This practice is concerned with establishing right models or paradigms and rejecting wrong models or paradigms. It poses and answers important questions such as; “What is a paradigm?” “What shapes our paradigms?” and “What are the factors that cause paradigms to change?” This practice also details four phases that are common to the process of change and growth. In addition, the practice of modeling identifies faulty parenting assumptions and offers Biblically acceptable parenting alternatives.

¹⁰ Richard Taylor, The Disciplined Life (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2002), 77-78. (This is a reprint of a book by the same name originally printed in 1962 by Beacon Hill Press).

Mark #2 is: The Practice of Learning to Elevate Virtues Above Feelings.

This practice details the difference between virtues and values. It equips parents to identify Biblical character qualities that are essential to the proper training of Christian children; character qualities such as honesty, integrity, love, respect, trust, discipline, compassion and so on. This practice also teaches parents how to replace reactivity with proactivity in the parenting model and very importantly, instructs parents how to instill a love of virtue into their children.

Mark #3 is: The Practice of Developing Moral Muscle.

This practice enables parents to teach children how to make morally and Biblically consistent decisions. It introduces parent and child to the three main components of the decision making process; namely the mind, the heart, and the moral conscience. This practice also contrasts the two most common decision-making alternatives and teaches parents how to train children to elevate Godly virtue above feelings driven reactivity.

Mark #4 is: The Practice of Training.

This practice highlights the essential virtues of responsibility, compassion and justice. It also teaches parents how to equip children to take ownership of their own choices. A growth/responsibility continuum is outlined in this practice that will enable parent and child to become fruitful and responsible in a Biblically balanced manner.

Mark #5 is: The Practice of Correction Through Encouragement and Chastisement.

This practice encourages parents to take advantage of moral training opportunities. Parents are introduced to the Biblical mandate for positive reinforcement and the importance of clear and unambiguous instruction from parent to child. This

practice builds upon all previous practices and delineates the time and place for Biblically balanced chastisement as a motivator for paradigm change in the life of the child. This practice refines the parenting model to help parents differentiate between immature childish and immoral foolish behavior on the part of their children.

Marks #6, 7, and 8 are: The Practices of Repentance, Forgiveness, and Restoration

Based upon the Luke 17 model, this practice teaches parents the absolute importance of seeking and receiving repentance, granting and receiving forgiveness, and restoring relationships in a timely way.

Mark #9 is: The Practice of Practice.

This practice is essential because it teaches parents how to consistently and persistently teach into character issues with their children. The Christian parenting process is not a once and done type of approach to raising children, rather it is the consistent and relentless pursuit of moral excellence, that day-by-day, and hour-by-hour eventually brings about moral and ethical renewal in the spirit of Proverbs 22:6.

The appendices to this work contain two separate character training syllabi'. The first is entitled "Parenting Matters: The Nine Practices of The Proactive Parent," and it aids in equipping Christian parents to train their children in nine Biblical areas of character development and virtue (see APPENDIX A). The second is similar in format and content, but it is designed to equip young adults to learn how to discover Biblical truth on their own. This course is entitled "Character Matters: The Nine Practices of Character-healthy Youth." (see APPENDIX B). Both courses were designed to be church-based training programs, and each syllabus contains nine marks of Biblical

character development that this writer believes to be essential to remedy and reverse the moral decline in the family, the church, and American culture today.

These nine marks of a character-driven parent are not simply designed to raise “nice” children. That is not a high enough goal. Instead, parents should be dedicated to raising the next generation of character-healthy children who ask why? instead of why not?. Young people who will not only be a joy in their own homes, but who will transform their culture and return American society once more, to a society of character and morality.

These nine marks will effectively teach Christian children how and why to elevate virtues above feelings. They will teach parents the importance of clear and unambiguous instruction. Children will learn how to be motivated by the love of virtue, instead of simply the fear of punishment, and they will be equipped to grant and receive forgiveness, repentance and restoration, all essential marks of God’s children.

Every day, parents and children are faced with the decision to make reactive or pro-active choices. In a culture where good is called evil, and evil good, how will parents and children navigate these difficult choices? It seems that only through hands-on Bible based parental training will they be able to discern what is truly right and wrong and reject the feelings driven reactivity that has created the “if it feels good, do it,” mentality of 21st century America. This training is not difficult, but needs to be addressed systematically with determination and a commitment to the highest quality possible.

What will be the moniker of the next generation? Will it be the next greatest generation or will it be more of the same? I believe Christian mothers and fathers have a sacred calling to raise up a generation that loves God and that will transform this world

for the cause of Christ, Deuteronomy 6: 6-9 couldn't be more clear regarding the role of parents in the character development of their own children,

And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The aim of this paper is not to be comprehensive, but thorough. Although others may argue that there are more, the nine practices of character development that this writer intends to discuss were developed after more than twenty years of teaching, to more than ten thousand students, combined with years of research, and thorough Biblical study.

The remainder of this Thesis project will include the following paragraphs:

In chapter two, the Biblical and theological foundations for the nine practices to include the scope and necessity for parental instruction, Biblical change, and the mandate for character development.

In chapter three, these nine practices will be compared and contrasted with other writers on parenting and character development in an effort to differentiate and support this writer's conclusions.

In chapter four, the effectiveness of the nine practices will be measured and evaluated against a sample of core group participants in the course of study.

Finally, in chapter five, outcomes, conclusions, and recommendations, as well as, options for further implementation of these nine practices will be explored.

CHAPTER TWO

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL DEFENSE

Responsibility, according to Stephen Covey, is the ability to choose your response.¹¹ He breaks the word responsibility into two root words “response” and “ability.” According to Covey, the ability to choose one’s response is not dependent upon circumstances; bad hair days are only bad hair days if one chooses to allow them to be so. Eleanor Roosevelt wrote, “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”¹² True enough, sharp words can hurt and harsh actions can humiliate, but the choice to feel inferior comes from within. Accordingly, self-respect cannot be taken unless it is given up by choice. Life in fact, is full of many choices. Paul, Timothy’s spiritual father, encourages his son in Christ to be strong in the grace that is in Jesus by making right choices according to 2 Timothy 2:1. Paul repeatedly instructs Timothy independently to make good choices that glorify God, while at the same time Paul acknowledges his own role as a model to Timothy and other believers. In 1 Corinthians 4: 14-17,

I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet would not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

Paul gives us the model for spiritual parenting. As a model of Christ-honoring character, Paul sets the example and reminds us that his spiritual son Timothy is equally well qualified to model Christ. Imitation is more than just mere flattery. It is, in fact, the

¹¹ Stephen Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 71.

¹² Eleanor Roosevelt, This is My Story, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1937), 71.

best way according to this text, to achieve Christlike character. Parents are encouraged to follow Paul's example by training their children to make God-honoring choices.

Joshua too, exhorts his fellow God fearers to choose wisely in Joshua 24:15, "And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." This family oriented verse instructs parents to choose God over the other options, and the adamant nature of Joshua's exhortation makes it clear that there is only one God-honoring option for the Christian parent intent on modeling Christlike character to their children.

It seems clear therefore, that the Christian parent, intent on modeling Christian character for their children, must focus on training that child to make God-honoring choices. Proverbs 22:6 reminds of this truth, "Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it." The daily choices of parents ultimately shape the character of their children and the choice for Christian parents to train their children to be character-healthy is not an optional one.

Biblically, the role of the parent in the character development of the child includes three imperatives. First, the Christian parent is to deliberately, informally, and repeatedly be involved in instructing their children to consistently elevate virtues above feelings according to Deuteronomy 6. Secondly, the Christian parent is to model for, and direct their child in, Biblical growth and change. The Ephesians 4 model of "putting-off" the old man and "putting-on" the new man serves as the primary focus of the Christian parent in the character development of their children. Finally, the Christian parent must instruct

their children to take character ownership as detailed in 2 Timothy 3.

The Biblical mandate for parental involvement in the character health of their children begins back in Deuteronomy. According to Deuteronomy 6: 5-9,

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and your gates.

Consistently modeling Christlikeness to their children is the mark and mandate of the Christian parent.

The Biblical foundations for the role of the parent in the character development of the child are found in Deuteronomy chapter six. Deuteronomy 6:7-9 firmly charges the parent with the role of chief character trainer to the child. This text makes clear the need for parents to teach their children devotion to values that are God ordained and eternal in nature. The remainder of chapter six provides examples to parents of how to elevate virtues over feelings, when training their children.

Moses sets the stage in Deuteronomy 6:1-2, by instructing parents to fear the Lord, keep all of His commands, and likewise, teach their children to fear the Lord and keep all of the Lord's commands, "Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged." The authority structure and teaching mandate is well defined in these two

verses. In the lead role, God is framed as the ultimate authority to be feared with reverential awe. In the supporting role, parents are to teach God's character, precepts, statutes, and commands to their children who are to do so to their children, and so on. Verse three finishes setting the stage by encouraging parents to be devoted to the process and in return, God will bless them for many generations. Merrill describes it this way, "The command to walk in the ways of the Lord (5:33) is also restated, this time in the appeal to hear and obey (6:3). In both cases it is with the end in view that God's people might live (5:33) and do so with success, prosperity, and for *many years*. (Italics mine).¹³

Deuteronomy 6:4 begins a new pericope that sets the record straight for a new generation of parents. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 gives parents the mandate to model, teach, and pass-on Godly virtue to their children and to do so with all of their might. The introduction of the Shema mandate, at this point in the redemptive history of Israel, is significant in that Moses is speaking to the next generation, not the initial generation of parents that fled Egypt. Since, the initial generation of parents has died away, under God's judgment, for their lack of faith, God now turns to the next generation of parents and gives them the mandate to love the Lord their God with all of their heart, soul, and might, and to teach their children to do the same. Miller describes the multi-generational impact of the Shema this way, "The initial function of the Shema is to identify the one who for this people will be the center of being and values and to begin to characterize the nature of the relationship between God and people."¹⁴

Verse four introduces God as unique and distinct from the polytheistic pagan gods

¹³ Eugene H. Merrill, The New American Commentary: Deuteronomy (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 161.

¹⁴ Patrick D. Miller, Deuteronomy (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 98.

of the Egyptians. For that reason, the God of Israel will not be dethroned or outdone, He will not fade away, and He cannot be manipulated. Jehovah God is absolute, sovereign, and authoritative and He is insistent that God-fearing parents teach their children His statutes and commands, according to verse six. Verse seven instructs parents how to teach their children to love God. The God-fearing parent is to deliberately, casually, and repeatedly instruct their children to consistently elevate Godly virtue above personal feelings. Teaching the child to elevate virtues above feelings must be done with diligence and is best modeled in casual ordinary settings, around the house, as they come and go, at bedtime etc. Deuteronomy six defines the role of the parent in the character development of their children by outlining three primary virtues that must be taught to children. Children must be taught the value of commitment, respect, and maturity according to this text.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 teaches parents how to recognize a heart committed to God. Such a heart is distinctive in three ways. First, the committed heart talks about God frequently and effortlessly. The admonition to “teach them diligently” found in verse seven, means to enforce or reinforce. To “teach them diligently” comes from the Hebrew word transliterated *Shanan*, which also means to point, or pierce, or sharpen, or inculcate.¹⁵ Therefore, the process of sharpening and inculcating children is a process that is habitual to the Christian parent. In the same way that a hunter or soldier has to continually sharpen his knife for it to remain useful, so too, the Christian parent ought to point their children toward God while in the car, at the park, in front of the television, at bed-time, and anywhere life might present an opportunity.

¹⁵ Spiros Zodhiates, The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1998), 1787.

Secondly, the committed heart is obvious to all. The parent's commitment to God should not be a mystery. Deuteronomy 6:8 states, "And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead." The Godly Christian parent models commitment to God for the benefit of their children. Such commitment is sincere and born from a strong personal relationship with God, on the part of the parent and goes well beyond just being good, moral, or wholesome. The committed Christian parent wears their faith in a way that is obvious to anyone who observes them and this parent can expect that their children will inculcate their commitment to God, as well. Wiersbe agrees, "How we live is important because it backs up what we say. Moses admonishes parents to discuss God's Word in the home, among the children, and to allow the Word to guide their minds and hands as they work throughout the day."¹⁶

Proverbs 6:20-23 describes the fruit of parental commitment to God; "My son, observe the commandment of your father, And do not forsake the teaching of your mother; Bind them continually on your heart; Tie them around your neck. When you walk about, they will guide you; When you sleep, they will watch over you; And when you awake, they will talk to you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life." Committed parents raise committed children and both parent and child are visibly character-healthy.

Finally, the committed heart builds family identity. The Christian family is to be identified by Godly character. This text encourages parents and children to be characterized by Godly commitment. The act of "writing them" on the doorposts of your house was both symbolic and literal in the Old Testament times. The Scriptures were

¹⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2007), 318.

literally written on small pieces of paper or papyrus, and placed in small wooden box called mezuzahs and hung on doorposts as a symbol of God's presence for the family to identify. The appearance of the mezuzah in the Hebrew home was meant to develop a family character identity. Wiersbe describes the function of the mezuzah this way, "Parents also attached a small container of Scripture, called a mezuzah, to the front door and on every door in the house. Each occupant touched the mezuzah reverently each time he or she passed through a door (Psalms 121:8). It was a sign that the house was to be a sanctuary for the Lord and a place where the Word was loved, obeyed, and taught."¹⁷ The action of "writing" is to be thought of as an ongoing, deliberate action on the part of the parents. Therefore, the role of the Christian parent is to deliberately, as well as informally, and repeatedly write Godly commitment on the hearts of their children.

Next, Deuteronomy 6:10-19 instructs parents to teach their children the value of honor and respect for God and others,

Then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied, then watch yourself, lest you forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by His name. You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for the Lord your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the Lord your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth. You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah. You should diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and His testimonies and His statutes, which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the Lord swore to give your fathers, by driving out all your enemies from before you, as the Lord has spoken.

¹⁷ Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament, 318.

The parent is to model “right and good” behavior for their children and the reward for doing so will be a lasting Godly inheritance. Parents are instructed to teach their children the value of respect for what God has provided. Christian parents must diligently teach their children to recognize Godly respect. Using Israel’s inheritance as a teaching tool in verses 10-11, Moses again delineates three characteristics that are essential for the parent to teach. The heart that respects God never forgets God, always fears and serves God, and never tests, yet always trusts God.

Esau squandered his inheritance. The prodigal son squandered his inheritance. By contrast, Paul instructs his spiritual son Timothy to respect and honor God’s inheritance when he encourages him to retain the standard of sound words, which you have heard from me, in the faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you. (2 Timothy 1:13-14). Paul coaches Timothy to make better choices than his predecessors, Esau and the prodigal. A heart that respects God does not easily forget God, regardless of how empty its stomach becomes, such as Esau’s. The heart that honors and respects God does not easily forget God’s precepts when distracted by greed, such as the prodigal son. The heart that respects God is careful to never forget God.

Moses commands parents to “watch” themselves “lest they forget the Lord” in Deuteronomy 6:12. Transliterated *Shamar*, in English, the Hebrew word for “watch” means to keep in view or to hedge around something or to guard as a watchman of cattle or sheep watches for a wolf.¹⁸ This word can also be translated to preserve, protect, or retain. The mandate for Christian parents is clear; they are to model and teach respect for

¹⁸ William Wilson, Old Testament Word Studies (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1978), 474.

God to their children in a diligent manner and that training will build Godly character that will serve to protect, preserve, and retain that child. Just like a shepherd watching over his flock never forgets that there is always the possibility of an attack from wild animals, so too, parents are to teach their children to never forget God and his precepts.

Finally, Deuteronomy 6:20-25 instructs Christian parents to instill maturity in their children by teaching their children to gain an eternal perspective regarding themselves, others, and God,

When your son asks you in times to come, saying, What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the Lord our God commanded you? then you shall say to your son, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt; and the Lord brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand. Moreover, the Lord showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household; and He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers. So the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always and for our survival, as it is today. And it will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us.

The God-fearing parent is instructed to teach their children to gain a Godly perspective, which in turn, will develop Godly maturity in the child. This passage of Scripture highlights three important perspectives for the Christian parent to instill in their children. According to Deuteronomy 6:20-25, Christian parents must teach their children to remember the hardship of past sins, appreciate the importance of God's redemption from past sins, and to always remember God's present provision and goodness. Wiersbe agrees, "Jewish fathers were commanded to teach their children the meaning of Passover, and of the laws God had given Israel, so that the next generation would understand how to trust Jehovah, love Him, and obey His laws. When our children are ignorant of the

past, they will have no hope for the future.”¹⁹

Recounting the hardship of past sins helps to build perspective in the heart of a child. Such recounting on the part of the parent should not be manipulative, but instructive. As the parent recounts the pain associated with past sin, they broaden the perspective of that child. Instilling such a broad perspective is not aimed at glorifying past sins, rather it serves a greater purpose, that of imputing maturity and Godly wisdom through a multi-generational perspective. Israel’s captivity in Egypt represented the bitterness of sin. When parents told the stories about the captivity, they recounted for their children the hardship of past sins. In doing so, they opened the door to introduce the goodness of God in verses 21-22. God’s goodness, according to these verses, is experienced through His redemptive work in delivering Israel from the bitterness of captivity.

The second perspective that parents must teach their children is to always remember God’s redemption from sin. Eternal and Godly perspective develops into maturity, in the life of the child, as the parent talks about God’s redemption, provision, and purposes. Verse 23 reveals a very important fact about God that highlights His purposes as it relates to the provision of redemption, that is, God wants to bring us out of our sinful ways in order to bring us into His purposes and provision. So, for Christian parents, it is imperative that they recount the bitterness of past sin in order to introduce the redemptive provision of God’s plan for the life of the child. For the child to understand that God brought him or her out of sin, in order to bring them into God’s plan for their life is important because it builds maturity, ultimately resulting in Godly character. Since, the child cannot gain such a perspective on past sin on their own it is even more important

¹⁹ Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament, 319.

for the Christian parent to provide that perspective, for the overall character-health of the child.

As Christian parents instill in their children an appreciation for the destructive nature and bitterness of past sins and as those same parents help their children to remember the wonder of God's redemption from that sin, they open the door to the third perspective of God's abiding goodness. Verses 24-25, remind parents to teach their children that God is always good. According to verse 24, Christian parents must immerse themselves in faithful obedience to God. Faithful obedience, combined with a reverential fear of God, is always in the parent's best interests. In fact, it is a matter of survival. The word translated survival in verse 24 comes from the Hebrew word *Chayah*, which means to live, enjoy life, or to live anew.²⁰ *Chayah* literally means to enliven or to restore to life. The application of this truth, in the context of Deuteronomy chapter six, is that the God-fearing parent is the one charged with ensuring that the survival of their offspring is assured by teaching them to obey and fear God. Building such a mature perspective in their children will not only assure the survival of the children, but will also develop within them an understanding of God's intrinsic goodness, renewing or enlivening their soul. This carefully taught perspective teaches the child that anything done for God's glory is also done for the child's good. As the parent consistently models mature Christian behavior by consistently elevating the virtue of God's goodness above the painful bitterness of past sinful choices, their children will grow and deepen in character healthy righteousness. Consistently modeling this type of Christlike behavior to their children is the mark and mandate of the Christian parent.

²⁰ Zodhiates, The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible, 1725.

The principle of putting-off old sinful behavior and putting-on new character-healthy behavior is another mark and mandate of the Christian parent. A proper understanding of the Ephesians 4 model of putting-off and putting-on is critically important to the proper character development of children. Ephesians chapter four answers the important question; how do Christian parents grow and change and how do those same Christian parents model growth and change for their children?

The Apostle Paul unapologetically states that God wants Christian parents and children to change. Such change is to be perpetual in nature and fundamental in scope. In the same way that Christian parents were to perpetually remind their children about the bitterness of past sin and the present goodness of God, so too, the Christian parent is to put-off old bitter, sinful behavior, and put-on new Godly behavior as a continual model for their children to imitate. Ephesians 4:22-24 serves as the proof, “that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

Parents and children alike are to put-on the “likeness of God” while at the same time both parent and child are to “lay aside” or put-off the former manner (sinful) past behavior. If these parallel behavioral choices are accomplished consistently, they become the basis for how parent and child grow in Christlikeness. Dr. Jim Berg author of Changed Into His Image and Essential Virtues put it this way in a recent email, “The theme of holiness is being lost today in the Christian liberty atmosphere of the pop culture church. Jesus said to go into the world and make disciples. Disciples are teachable

students of the Lord Jesus. They are committed to *putting off* anything that is not Christlike, committed to spending significant time listening to His teaching in the Word to develop His mindset and are willing to be courageous and *put on* a lifestyle that is distinctively Christian in order to compassionately reach the world with the gospel.”²¹ The parent is the primary disciple-maker of the child.

There are five keys to character-healthy Christian growth, found in Ephesians 4:22-24. Christian growth assumes that truly regenerated believers will be consistently renewing themselves in the Spirit, by putting off the old self and putting on the new self as a result of renewed thinking that is developed through time spent in study of Gods Word. Christian growth assumes change and without change there is no true lasting sanctification, for the believer. John MacArthur agrees that Christian growth cannot take place without the renewing of the mind that takes place while ingesting Gods Word, “That kind of transformation can occur only as the Holy Spirit changes our thinking through consistent study and meditation of Scripture. The renewed mind is one saturated with and controlled by the Word of God.”²² As for the parent, the same is true. Parents must be growing in Christ, that is, drawing closer to Him through consistently renewing themselves in the Spirit. Since the parent is the primary role model for their children, parents must model the need to grow and change into the likeness of God. Regardless of the philosophical differences among parenting experts, there is general agreement that parents need to grow and as they do, their growth serves as an incentive model for their children to grow also. However, there is a wide variety of opinions on how to change,

²¹ Jim Berg, Greenville, SC, 22 Dec 2009, email to Stephen Scheibner, Georgetown, ME, 1. Regarding Core Values.

²² John MacArthur, The MacArthur Bible Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 1545.

why to change, where, who, and into what, to change. Thankfully, Ephesians 4: 22-24 gives us real clarity on the issue of progressive sanctification that will serve as a model for growth for both parent and child, alike. In fact, this text directs us to be on the look out for those paradigms that are being corrupted by the lusts of deceit and to in turn abandon those paradigms and replace them with God honoring, Spirit directed, Christlike models. The key truths of Ephesians 4:22-24 are these,

God wants parents and children to be changing...

A review of the first three chapters of Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus reveals that the Ephesian believers had been richly blessed by Christ and they had also been blessed to have Paul and Timothy as their pastors, for a time. Yet, no less than six times in the book of Ephesians alone, Paul instructs the church to be growing and changing (4:1, 13, 15, 17, 22-24; 5:1). Paul repeats his theme of growth and change for parents and children in the book of Colossians chapter 3: 5-15 and in 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Romans 12:1-2. Change is not easy, but change must take place. Whenever God requires change, God enables change. Passages such as Philippians 1:6, 2:13, and 4:13 support this assertion. It is true that regenerated believers can do all God directed things through God's enabling power, including taking on the challenges associated with growth and change. O'Brien describes Gods enabling of change in the believer this way, "The fundamental aspect of the gospel tradition that the readers had been taught (cf. vv. 22-23) was *to put on the new self* which was created to display those ethical qualities, such as righteousness and holiness, that belong to God. Furthermore, this infinitive, *to put on*, has an implied imperatival force, not in the sense that they were to continue putting on the new man, but that they should conduct their lives in light of the mighty change God had

effected.”²³ O’Brien is suggesting that God will enable the change He desires to make in the believer. Wiersbe agrees, “As the mind understands the truth of God’s Word, it is gradually transformed by the Spirit, and this renewal leads to a changed life.”²⁴ The need to grow and change is fundamental to the role of the parent in the character development of children.

God wants parents and children to be changing to be more like His Son...

Change merely for the sake of change is not the aim of the scriptures. Transformation into the image of Christ is the biblical aim. Consider Colossians 1:28 carefully, “And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ.” “Completeness,” according to this text, is only found in Christ and not in a favorite teacher, pastor or sports star. Parents are repeatedly encouraged, throughout the scriptures, to become more like Christ in their thoughts, motives and actions. Parents, who encourage their children to grow and change, must therefore keep the focus on Christ and Him alone.

God wants parents and children to be changing to be more like His Son by *putting off the old man...* (4:22).

Several objections are raised here and they must be addressed. What is the “old man?” Why put-off the “old man?” And, Why not just cohabituate with the “old man?” First, the “old man” or the “old self” according to Hoehner represents sinful habits,

²³ Peter T. O’Brien, The Letter To The Ephesians (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 331.

²⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2007), 609.

patterns and paradigms.²⁵ Ephesians 2:3 reminds parent and child that the “old self” paradigms are the habits of thinking and acting that their corrupt nature adopted and these paradigms are destined for wrath. These corrupt paradigms cannot be “lived with” by simply adjusting an attitude or altering a behavior, they must be abandoned all together, according to the scriptures.

Secondly, the principle of putting-off means to lay aside or to strip away, as in the case of old dirty clothes. Putting-off old behaviors emphasizes personal responsibility for change, in the same way, that a parent would require a child to strip away filthy clothing, immediately upon entering the home, in order to preserve the cleanliness of the dwelling. The word “corrupt” in Ephesians 4:22, means putrid, crumbling, rotten, perverted and evil.²⁶ These are not character traits that Christian parents can cohabitate with and still be able to serve as any sort of God honoring role model.

Two additional questions emerge that require attention. How do parents identify the “old self” described in verse 22? And, what makes the old self “deceitful?” The word for lust, used in verse 22, means a strong desire of any kind that motivates behavior.²⁷ In order to identify the “lusts of deceit,” Christian parents must ask themselves two deeply reflective questions. First, do I react poorly when I don’t get something I strongly desire? Secondly, am I willing to disobey God to see my strong desire fulfilled? If the answer to either of these two questions is “yes,” then the parent can be certain that the “old self,” corrupted by the “lusts of deceit” are at the root of the behavior. Often, parents and children will

²⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 604.

²⁶ Cleon L. Rogers Jr., and Cleon L. Rogers III, The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key To The Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 442.

²⁷ Zodhiates, The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible, 1862-63.

react in anger or malice, when they do not get what they want. Such unbiblical behavior is solid evidence of the presence of deceitful lusts. It is this type of behavior that Ephesians 4:22 reminds parents to put-off. In addition, if parents are willing to disobey God to see a strong desire fulfilled, they can be sure that their children will model that same behavior as well.

Paul describes these strong desires as deceitful, because they promise what they cannot deliver. The peace and joy that the lusts of deceit offer are never sustained for any length of time and as a result, Paul calls them deceitful. The writer of Hebrews similarly warns parents in Hebrews 3:12-13, “Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

God wants parents to shed those paradigms that harden them, in order to become more like His Son. In addition, parents are to model such sanctifying behavior to their children. However, the process of progressive sanctification does not end when the lusts of deceit are identified and accordingly put off, there is still more that is required of parents. A new Godly paradigm must replace the old deceitful paradigm.

God wants parents and children to be changing to be more like His Son by putting off the old man and *putting on the new man...* (4:24).

Paul balances the growth paradigm for parents by including the necessity for all believers to put on a new God honoring paradigm, replacing the deceitful paradigm that has just been shed. Verse 24 plainly contrasts verse 22, thus completing the principle of putting-off the old, while simultaneously putting-on the new. Parents often teach this

principle to their children when they scold them for unacceptable behavior, such as lying, and then balance out the teaching moment by instructing the child to tell the truth. The imperative of “putting-on” according to MacArthur is much like putting on clean clothes, after the dirty ones have been removed.²⁸ The putting-on of the new self in verse 24 means to adopt new ways of thinking and acting; emphasizing personal responsibility for change.²⁹ For example, in Revelation 3, Jesus instructs the church at Laodicea to put-off their wretched self-reliance and replace it by putting-on the personal purity that He alone can provide. Similarly, Colossians 3:5-15 instructs the believer to put-off all sorts of worldly paradigms such as: immorality, impurity, greed, idolatry, lying, anger, and wrath, just to name a few, and to replace those things with God honoring holiness, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, etc.

The new man, or new self, named in Ephesians 4:24 describes the habits/paradigms of thinking and acting that emulate Christ. The “righteousness and holiness of the truth” delineated in this verse is as apt a description of Christlikeness as can be found in the scriptures. Parents intent on raising children with Godly character will put on this Christlikeness as they model effective Christian growth.

God wants parents and children to be changing to be more like His Son by putting off the old man and putting on the new man as a result of renewed thinking in the power of the Spirit...

On the subject of moral choices, C.S Lewis describes the process of renewed thinking this way,

People often think of Christian morality as a kind of bargain in which God

²⁸ Rodgers, The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key To The Greek New Testament, 442.

²⁹ MacArthur, The MacArthur Bible Commentary, 1696.

says ‘If you keep a lot of rules, I’ll reward you, and if you don’t I’ll do the other thing.’ I do not think this is the best way of looking at it. I would much rather say that every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all of your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a Heaven creature or into a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow creatures, and with itself.³⁰

In his own words, Lewis describes the process of “putting-off” and “putting-on” through the renewed thinking in Christ, that is so critical to Christian growth and the making of right moral choices. The “central part” of both parent and child, to which Lewis is referring, is the heart and mind of the individual. Mind and heart are synonymous in the New Testament and are to be viewed as the center for thought, understanding, belief, motives, and actions. Parental paradigms reside in that central place, described by Lewis. Renewal, according to Ephesians 4: 23-24, means to be renovated or rejuvenated.³¹ Further, the expression “in the spirit of the mind,” does not refer to some superficial change of opinion, or attitude of behavior adjustment, rather, it means that which gives the mind both its bent and its material of thought.³² It is describing the total transformation of the thought process by putting off completely the old thought patterns and replacing them completely with new thought patterns; in this case, Christlike thought patterns.

“Renewal in the spirit of the mind,” is similar to the difference between remodeling and renovating. If you were tired of the look of your old kitchen, you could merely remodel your kitchen, by applying some new paint to the surfaces of the old

³⁰ C.S. Lewis, *The Joyful Christian*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977), 128.

³¹ Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, 1805.

³² Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, 1859.

cabinets, giving them a face-lift. You could resurface the old counter tops and polish the existing fixtures, refreshing their look; or you could completely renovate the old kitchen by stripping out the old cabinets, counter tops, and fixtures and bringing in all new items. Regarding old deceitful paradigms, the Ephesians 4 model instructs parents to allow God to completely renovate their lives, by tearing out the old fixtures, so that they can be replaced with all new Biblical fixtures. A mere face-lift is not sufficient when it comes to changing a paradigm that God's Word reveals as defective. True renewal means having thinking patterns so drastically changed, that parents are transformed into new, Christlike vessels, in the process.

The parent, therefore, who wishes to follow Christ in faithful obedience to His Word will seek to be transformed and will seek to act as a role model for transformation in the life of their children. Consequently, one of the roles/marks of a parent, regarding the character development of their children, is that they grow and change and that they also model growth and change for their children, in all that they do, by establishing right paradigms, in the spirit of the Ephesians 4 model. God wants parents and children to be changing to be more like His Son by putting off the old man and putting on the new man as a result of renewed thinking in the power of the Spirit

The Christian parent must instruct their children to take character ownership as detailed in 2 Timothy 3:14-17,

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Character ownership is embodied in these verses. Paul describes himself as a type of father to Timothy. Paul reminds his spiritual son Timothy and his readers that the Scriptures alone are capable of giving children wisdom that leads to salvation and sanctification, in Christ Jesus. Paul's admonition that all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, training etc... sounds very much like Deuteronomy 6:6-9 when the writer of Deuteronomy admonishes parents to teach the Scriptures diligently to their children. Paul's conclusion, in verse 17, is that those who know the Scriptures are equipped to become adequate. The Greek word translated *adequate* is the word *Artios* (from *aro*), which means to fit or to be complete, sufficient, or completely qualified.³³ Similar to integrity, it means to be character complete or to take character ownership. The properly trained child, therefore, is one who is mature, wise, and equipped for every good work, taking ownership of a complete character. Two key actions are required of parents to ensure that their children will have all they need to become character owners. First, the parent must invest in the child by diligently and deliberately instructing the child, as previously discussed in this chapter. Secondly, that instruction must be based upon the Word of God. The Scriptures are sufficient for the proper character development of children.

Timothy grew to take ownership of his character as the result of continual instruction in the Scriptures, presumably introduced to him by his mother and grandmother. 2 Timothy 1:5 details a maternal lineage of faith in Christ that was taught to Timothy, "For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well." Since faith comes from

³³ Zodhiates, The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible, 1812.

hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Romans 10:17), it is reasonable to assume that young Timothy was taught the Scriptures by his mother, grandmother, and spiritual father, Paul.

Through the lens of Scripture, Paul instructed Timothy to change into the image of Christ by putting-off the old man and putting-on the new man as a result of renewed thinking, in the power of the Spirit, when he exhorts Timothy to “Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” according to 2 Timothy 1:13. In the next chapter of 2 Timothy, Paul encourages Timothy to take ownership of his relationship with Christ, through the sound words of the Apostle, when he says, “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:1-2). The instruction from Paul to Timothy is clear; Paul expects Timothy to demonstrate obedience to the Word of God by retaining the sound words shared with him by the Apostle. He further expects that Timothy will act responsibly, by entrusting those same words of wisdom to faithful men who are able to teach others to do the same.

The principle of character ownership is imperative for Timothy. Essentially, Paul is instructing Timothy to follow a Christian growth continuum that begins with faithful obedience to the Word, when he instructs him to retain the standard of sound words in verse 13. Secondly, Paul instructs Timothy to take on increasing responsibility by remaining strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and earning the right to be heard, by those faithful men who need to be instructed in the same sound words that Paul taught Timothy. Finally, the Christian growth continuum Paul has modeled for Timothy results

in full character completeness. As Timothy takes ownership of his character, (like his spiritual father Paul) he will be able to say “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing,” according to 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Consequently, parents should follow the Pauline model of character development when training their own children. Parents must deliberately and diligently teach their children the full counsel of God’s Word, while the parents model obedience to God’s Word, in the spirit of the Deuteronomy 6 model. Next, Christian parents must give obedient children increasing amounts of responsibility, that will serve to reinforce the standard of those sound words, shared through the precept of the Word and the clear instruction of the parent.

Finally, the consistently obedient and responsible child takes ownership of their relationship with Christ, demonstrating faithfulness. Such a child can be expected to consistently elevate virtues above feelings, diligently demonstrating a desire to change into the image of Christ, by putting-off the old patterns of sinful behavior and appropriately putting-on new Biblical patterns of behavior as a result of renewed thinking, in the power of the Spirit. Finally, the child will grow in obedience to God’s Word, taking on increasing amounts of character responsibility, which will eventually lead to complete character ownership.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Having established the need for a parent's involvement in the character development of their children, and further having established the Biblical and Theological framework for the same, it becomes necessary now to ascertain what other experts in the field of character development are saying about the parents role in the character development of children. There are many books written on the subject of child training, but surprisingly few of them spend any significant time linking training to specific character qualities. However, there are enough good authors and sources to proceed and make a comprehensive argument for the proactive role of the parent in the character development of children. It is this writer's intention to put several of these parenting experts in conversation with each other regarding the role of parents in the character development of children and determine their agreement or disagreement with the nine marks of proactive parenting (NPPP) discussed in chapter one.

It is interesting to note that the pedigree of the author's commenting on parenting, runs the gamut from PhD's, to trained counselors, to parents with years of parenting experience, but no secondary education. Often, the most educated authors do not have the same dedicated following accorded to the authors writing simply from the framework of personal experience. This is not surprising, considering the fact that most parents, seemingly looking for guidance in their own parenting, are more interested in proven results, than theory and conjecture. This writer will utilize a mixture of parenting

“experts” in this chapter, in order to provide the most comprehensive overview of the prevailing parenting philosophies.

By considering each identified “mark” from chapter one, it will be a practical matter to cull the similarities and differences in each parenting philosophy. As well, it will make it possible to discern the end goal of the various parenting philosophies and the strategies employed to arrive at these goals.

Mark #1 is the Practice of Modeling. This mark sets the framework of establishing right paradigms and discarding unworkable paradigms. As well, Mark #1 will assist in the identification of faulty parenting assumptions and the adoption of Biblically acceptable parenting choices. In considering this foundational mark, it is important to examine whether or not other authors believe that it is true that parents operate from the basis of faulty parenting assumptions.

The first faulty paradigm to be examined is the paradigm of the necessity of structure or the lack thereof in a child’s life. Elisabeth Elliot, in her book The Shaping of A Christian Family writes this, “There is a great deal of talk these days about having things *unstructured*. Just how can a Christian make this jibe with such Scriptures as “Let everything be done decently and in order” (I Cor. 14:40), or with a careful study of God’s creation? What would happen to the galaxies if they were unstructured? Certainly there should be order in the home.”³⁴ Although, at first, it would seem that author Edith Schaeffer disagrees with Mrs. Elliot, a further reading shows the underlying agreement between these two authors. Consider this excerpt from What Is A Family? by Edith Schaeffer. “Families are meant to be a mobile, growing, changing, beautiful art form

³⁴ Elisabeth Elliot, The Shaping of a Christian Family (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1992), xiii-xiv.

which will in some tiny way picture the beauty of the gigantic art form of the complete ‘Family’ of those who have come to God in his given way, and been born again.”³⁵ From this statement, it would seem that Mrs. Schaeffer is a proponent of a free-flowing lack of structure, but she completes her thought with this, “People need to experience the beauty of being part of a mobile art form, and people who have never known such beauty exists need to see it taking place. If human relationships are to be beautiful on a wider form, in church and state, the individual families making up society have to be really worked on by someone who understands that artists have to *work* to produce their art. It doesn’t just fall down readymade from the sky!”³⁶ Considering Mrs. Schaeffer’s thought in its fullness, she does, indeed, agree with Elizabeth Elliot that there must be structure and attention given to produce a family. This writer would agree that only a structured approach to child training produces consistently God-honoring character in children.

Discussing the need to adopt appropriate paradigms, Ed Young writes this, in The 10 Commandments of Parenting, “People build functional families by following the absolute principles God lays out in His Word.”³⁷ In other words, to build character-healthy, functional families, adherence to the Biblical mandates must be conscientiously followed.

Like Ed Young, Dr. David Jeremiah, in his work, Hopeful Parenting, had much to say about the place of Biblical teaching in the training of children. “Get the Bible in your heart and mind and into the hearts and minds of your children, and when you do, you’ll find that when your family ship sets sail, you’ll be ready for whatever storms you may

³⁵ Edith Schaeffer, What Is A Family (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 21.

³⁶ Edith Schaeffer, What Is A Family, 29.

³⁷ Ed Young, The 10 Commandments of Parenting (Chicago: Moody, 2004), 20.

face.”³⁸ Dr. Jeremiah’s words bring great encouragement to the Christian parent, but he goes on, “Spiritual health is linked inseparably to the Word of God. Only as God’s Word takes center stage in the lives of His people can we expect our families to thrive. The principles of the Word of God work in the home.”³⁹

With the paradigms of structure and Biblical authority in place, parents can then begin to model, consistently, appropriate character-healthy behavior. Consider this quote, taken from The Family, by Jack and Judith Balswick. “We believe spiritual formation begins in the home through everyday interaction practices and patterns of modeling that occur in day-to-day living.”⁴⁰ These authors continue, “The family is indispensable when it comes to building character in family members. How parents live out their faith in the context of the family relationship has an enormous impact.”⁴¹ Author and songwriter, Monte Swan, takes the concept of modeling a step further as he encourages parents to not simply “teach” the concepts they are modeling, but to embrace and live those concepts in a transparent way. Consider this quote from his book entitled, Romancing Your Child’s Heart, “But the key to successful teaching of God’s truth is the state of our hearts, which must be so permeated with God-not merely a repetition of correct ideas about God. Effective parental doing flows from being.”⁴² Reminiscing about the modeling shown in her own home, Elizabeth Elliot states,

The example of parents, for good or ill, is an influence far more profound than can be measured. Their discipline and orderliness, their calm control were not things we noticed at all as children, of course. It was just the way

³⁸ David Jeremiah, Hopeful Parenting (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008), 67.

³⁹ Jeremiah, Hopeful Parenting, 67.

⁴⁰ Jack O. Balswick, and Judith K. Balswick, The Family (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 145.

⁴¹ Balswick, The Family, 145.

⁴² Monte Swan, Romancing Your Child’s Heart (Sisters: Loyal Publishing, 2002), 112.

things were at home, and hence the way we thought things were supposed to be, so we were horribly shocked when we visited homes where things were not disciplined, orderly, and calm. As I look back I know that it was the presence of God that made the difference.⁴³

Taken as a whole, all of these authors agree that structure, put in place by an adherence to Biblical standards, and consistently modeled by parents, will produce character-healthy children. Although some of the authors advocate more freedom within the structure, all would agree that a lack of structure and a lack of Biblical standards only leads to unhealthy and dysfunctional children.

Mark # 2 is the Practice of Learning to Elevate Virtues Above Feelings. Although few authors differentiated between needing to elevate virtues, while subordinating feelings, there was quite a bit of discussion surrounding the need to define and teach virtue to children. As well, Mark #2 discusses the need for proactive decision making, as opposed to reactive impulsiveness. Several authors further reiterated this need for proactive decision making.

Dr. David Jeremiah lays the foundation for the need to pass on Biblical values and virtues to our children when he states this, “People with strong moral values normally want to pass on those values to their children, to perpetuate a godly influence in the next generation. They want to see their values continue.”⁴⁴ Edith Schaeffer illuminates this need for passing on truth even further. She writes,

I think we can see the whole race as one in which true truth is to be handed over like the flag in a relay race, from generation to generation. The cloud of witnesses is concerned not just with us as individuals (although we are significant as individuals-to others, as well as to the Lord Himself), but with the next in line. We are responsible for handing on the

⁴³ Elliot, *The Shaping of a Christian Family*, 53.

⁴⁴ Jeremiah, *Hopeful Parenting*, 93-94.

flag and for being very careful not to drop it-or to drop out-because of our responsibility to the next generation.”⁴⁵

Interestingly, different authors considered different virtues to be of utmost importance and therefore, singled out these virtues in their writings. H. Clay Trumbull, writing in 1890, presented a clear discourse on the need to teach children the virtue of self-control. He stated, “A child who is trained to self-control-as a child may be-is already a true man in his fitness for manly self-mastery. A man who was not trained, in childhood, to self-control, is hopelessly a child in his combat with himself; and he can never regain the vantage-ground which his childhood gave him, in the battle which then opened before him, and in the thick of which he still finds himself.”⁴⁶ Further illuminating this daily battle of self-control in all areas, are two young authors from this generation. Writing in their book, Do Hard Things, teenage authors Alex and Brett Harris had this to say, “Doing hard things is how we exercise our bodies, our minds, and our faith. Small hard things are the individual repetitions-like a single push-up. They are seemingly insignificant by themselves but guaranteed to get results over time.”⁴⁷ They continue, “That’s where the “do hard things” mentality comes in. It reminds us that sometimes the smallest things can be the hardest things and that the purpose of effort is to gain strength. Being faithful in the smallest things is the way to gain, maintain, and demonstrate the strength needed to accomplish something great.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Schaeffer, What Is A Family, 106.

⁴⁶ H. Clay Trumbull, Hints on Child Training (Eugene: Great Expectations Book Company, 1890), 53.

⁴⁷ Alex Harris, and Brett Harris, Do Hard Things (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2008), 138.

⁴⁸ Harris and Harris, Do Hard Things, 139.

Dr. David Jeremiah links the need for self control with the need to stand up to peer pressure. In discussing the importance of a young person's choices as related to peer pressure, he states this, " Every choice he makes in some way changes what he is inside. Every time he decides against God and against good, he does something to himself that makes it easier for him to respond wrongly the next time. And every time he decides for God and for good, he builds something into his inward character that will help him become who he ought to be."⁴⁹

Taking this virtue of self-control even further, Elisabeth Elliot interchanges the concept of self-control with the concept of orderliness. Within this virtue of orderliness, she then delineates sister qualities such as punctuality, respect, and submission within family relationships. Consider these quotes from The Shaping of a Christian Family,

Our home was orderly. The grass was trimmed, the porch swept, wagons, bicycles, and sleds put away in the garage... A perfect home. Was it? Of course not. It could not have been impeccable at all times, but this is my impression and that of others who remember our home at all...This was a visible sign of an invisible reality.⁵⁰ She goes on, The smooth running of the household wheels meant punctuality. While some may regard strict punctuality as an amusing peculiarity or an irritating compulsion, it was a matter of Christian conscience to my father and hence to us. Lateness is stealing, he said. You are robbing others of their most irreplaceable commodity, time.⁵¹

Finally, speaking of the virtue of submissiveness, Elliot had this to say, "My father and mother took for granted the hierarchical order of the Christian home, a matter of far greater significance than where the schoolbooks and toys were kept. The husband was to be the head of the home, the wife in glad subjection to the office he was

⁴⁹ Jeremiah, Hopeful Parenting, 119.

⁵⁰ Elliot, The Shaping of a Christian Family, 73.

⁵¹ Elliot, The Shaping of a Christian Family, 75-76.

assigned.”⁵² Obviously, from this author’s perspective, the simple virtue of self-control encompasses much more than first imagined.

Monte Swan concisely summarizes the importance of parents knowing, teaching, and modeling character-healthy virtues for their children. In his book, Romancing Your Child’s Heart, he clearly states, “Parents can only expect to infect their children with godly character and virtue if they are themselves contagious. What our children ‘catch’ from us will impact their hearts more than what they are taught in more direct ways. Our character-made up of characteristics like those described here-is the hammer that drives home the truth of what we say into the minds and hearts of our children. And what we do is a reflection of that character.”⁵³ Simply stated, all of the previously quoted authors would articulate that more is caught than taught to our children.

Beyond simply knowing and modeling virtues, Mark #2 emphasizes that parents must learn to be proactive in their decision-making. Well-known homeschool author and speaker, Sally Clarkson, paints a vivid word picture of the pro-active parent in her book, Seasons of a Mother’s Heart. Taken from that book, here is her description,

The other kind of Christian parent lives what I would call an intentional Christian life. They start with a spiritual intent, that they want to disciple their children to become followers of Jesus Christ. As they look at the good things to do, they choose the ones that fit their spiritual intentions for their children. Nothing is done accidentally or incidentally. What they choose to do, they do on purpose, intentionally, because it is the best thing for their children.⁵⁴

She goes on to warn parents of some of the unintended consequences of pro-active parenting. “Spiritual intent can lead a family to make a decision that to others, or to the

⁵² Elliot, The Shaping of a Christian Family, 74.

⁵³ Swan, Romancing Your Child’s Heart, 185-186.

⁵⁴ Sally Clarkson, Seasons of a Mother’s Heart (Walnut Springs: Whole Heart Ministries, 1998), 146.

world, might seem misguided, or even foolish.”⁵⁵ George Barna, writing in Revolutionary Parenting, seconds this truth stating, “Our research found that parents are more likely to raise spiritual champions if they accept the fact that from day one their parenting efforts will stray from the norm and will put them at odds with parents who are pursuing a more conventional approach.”⁵⁶

Authors Kurt and Olivia Brunner continue the pro-activity conversation by reminding us of the fruit we can glean from pro-actively training our children and modeling Christ-like virtues and values,

The compass passing process can be challenging, exhausting, and often intimidating. The questions never stop. The task is never done. Their little hearts look to us for answers to life. We wonder whether we are up to the task. But if we don’t do it, who will? Future generations are waiting for us to start the cycle, to teach them the values that will give them an anchor for living. As we look back from eternity, may we hear that our children, grandchildren, and beyond “put their trust in God” thanks to the effort we put forth today.⁵⁷

Although they might have had differing opinions on which virtue or character quality is the most important, all of the authors this writer researched strongly agreed that children need to learn to exhibit character-healthy virtue. They also agreed that the parents are the primary teachers of those virtues and that in order to be successful, they, the parents, must be exhibiting the desired virtues in their own lives. In addition, the authors recognized the need for pro-active action in implementing this teaching, realizing that such a pro-active course would often result in misunderstanding and judgment from other parents.

⁵⁵ Clarkson, Seasons of a Mother’s Heart, 146.

⁵⁶ George Barna, Revolutionary Parenting (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 2007), 29.

⁵⁷ Kurt Bruner, and Olivia Bruner, The Family Compass (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor, 1999), 197.

Mark #3 introduces the Practice of Developing Moral Muscle. This practice introduces the how and why of teaching children how to make morally and Biblically consistent decisions. In addition, Mark #3 teaches parents how to train their children to elevate Godly virtue above feelings driven reactivity. Not surprisingly, a number of authors joined the chorus to encourage parents to teach their children to make consistently Biblical decisions.

In her book, All The Way Home, author Mary Pride introduces the idea of building a Christian home atmosphere to positively influence our children for Christ. Here is what she says regarding a Christian home,

Inside my home we are building a Christian culture. We don't have to guess and wonder about deep political theories such as theocracy v. pluralism v. natural law v. who-knows-what. My home is a Christian nation. We have Christian rulers (Mommy and Daddy), Christian laws, and Christian enforcement. We have Christian media: Christian books, magazines, and videos. Not all of these are produced by Christians, but they fit in with our Christian worldview.⁵⁸

In his book, The 10 Commandments of Parenting, Ed Young takes this principle of building a Christian atmosphere as a teaching tool and amplifies the principle by the addition of the use of "teachable moments." He says this, "Rather than the full court press, dads and moms following the teachable-moments strategy watch for those special times when their children are open and ready to hear and learn. Parents must be alert because these moments occur randomly-in the morning, evening, at mealtimes, or at play."⁵⁹ He goes on to add this,

Teachable moments come when a child has been hurt, but also when his behavior has come back to sting him- as when he has lied. These are opportunities to teach our sons or daughters deep principles and truths,

⁵⁸ Mary Pride, All The Way Home (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1989), 239-240.

⁵⁹ Young, The 10 Commandments of Parenting, 160.

such as grace, mercy, God's love, and the dynamics of sowing and reaping. Through such teachable moments we show our children that God's truths are not true simply because they're in the Bible, but they are in the Bible because they are true.⁶⁰

Having established the need for a teaching environment and the use of teachable moments, other authors further illuminated strategies for teaching character-healthy virtues and values. Author Paul Tripp lays out the ultimate character quality that our children need to incorporate, the character quality of a heart for God. Writing in his book, Age of Opportunity, Tripp says this, "A heart for God. Above all else, this is the goal of our parenting efforts. This is *the* quality we want to see in our teenagers as they prepare to leave home. This quality will give a God-focus to all their other character qualities and to their lives as well."⁶¹ This foundational character quality, a heart for God, shows up in the myriad of other qualities expounded upon by other authors.

Monte Swan offers storytelling as one of the most powerful tools available to pass on Biblical virtues to our children. He states,

We can tell our children what to do, or how to do something. We can teach them morals and rules. But what we say is likely to go in one ear and out the other unless we give them handles by which to grab the meanings we wish to communicate. Good stories carry the freight of truth without moralizing. The best stories show us God's reality, developing within us a thirst to experience it, not just know about it. Stories enable us both to feel and understand, and this empowers us to live well.⁶²

Edith Schaeffer would reiterate Mr. Swan's point of view, adding as well, that stories should include time for discussion, questions, and answers. Here is what she says concerning passing on truths to our children. "What does talk mean? It is a verbalized communication, which gives some amount of understanding to the person listening. Is it

⁶⁰ Young, The 10 Commandments of Parenting, 161.

⁶¹ Paul David Tripp, Age of Opportunity (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2001), 170.

⁶² Swan, Romancing Your Child's Heart, 65.

only a speech or a lecture? I think it is a two-way communication of questions and answers.”⁶³ She continues, “The answer was to be one going back in history and telling what God did. It was to show the marvel of God’s work, but also the fact that He kept His promises to His people. We are to answer our children’s questions from the history of the Bible, but should also have something real to say concerning the wonder of God’s work in history since the first-century church, and even in our own lives.”⁶⁴

Regarding the parent who chooses not to train his children in character-healthy virtues, H. Clay Trumbull had a grave warning,

But if a child be in possession of an ordinary measure of faculties and capacity, his training will decide the manner and method and extent of the use of his God-given powers. It is, therefore, largely a child’s training that settles the question whether a child is graceful or awkward in his personal movements, gentle or rough in his ways with his fellows, considerate or thoughtless in his bearing toward others; whether he is captious or tractable within the bounds of due restraint; whether he is methodical and precise, or unsystematic and irregular, in the discharge of his daily duties; whether he is faithful in his studies, or is neglectful of them; whether he is industrious or indolent in his habits; whether the tastes which he indulges in his diet and dress and reading and amusements and companionships are refined, or are low. In all these things his course indicates what his training has been; or it suggests the training that he needed, but has missed.⁶⁵

Mr. Trumbull accurately summarizes the sentiments of many authors when he lays the blame for a morally ill-prepared young person at the feet of his parents. George Barna further amplifies this thought when he states,

Most parents are focused on the wrong standards of success and are willing either to settle for what their well-intentioned but ill-informed efforts produce or to deny that there is any problem to address. As a result, our children are suffering in various dimensions of life, but especially in the

⁶³ Schaeffer, What Is A Family, 110.

⁶⁴ Schaeffer, What Is A Family, 110.

⁶⁵ Trumbull, Hints on Child Training, 11-12.

spiritual dimension. This crisis is seriously undermining the potential of our next generation to become spiritual champions.⁶⁶

Understanding the grave nature of the crisis of character in our young people, how can parents go about instilling character-healthy values in their children? David Jeremiah offers parents this advice,

Encourage your son to get his convictions from his love for God and from His Word. Urge him to memorize Scripture verses that will strengthen him when the pressure comes. But most of all, help him to make the right decision before it has to be made. That way, when the crisis comes he will simply be enforcing a decision, not making one-and it is much easier to enforce a decision than to make a tough choice under pressure.⁶⁷

Elisabeth Elliot also underscores the importance of parents teaching their children to make wise and character-healthy choices. She says, “A mission for your redemption. This is how Christian parents see their enforcement of the principles on which their home is based. The child has many wants...He does not know what will destroy him. His parents do. Their refusal is his redemption.”⁶⁸ As both Dr. Jeremiah and Elisabeth Elliot make clear, children must be trained to elevate virtues simply because of their love of virtue, or in the urgency of the moment, they will make reactive and often destructive choices.

Kurt and Olivia Brunner summarize the how and why of teaching character-healthy virtues to our children in their book, The Family Compass. They use two principles to teach these important truths. The Lenses Principles states this: “Our children need the corrective lenses of truth in order to navigate the deceptive roads of life.”⁶⁹ In other words, the Brunners are stressing the fact that in order to live Biblical and

⁶⁶ Barna, Revolutionary Parenting, xxii.

⁶⁷ Jeremiah, Hopeful Parenting, 119.

⁶⁸ Elliot, The Shaping of a Christian Family, 136.

⁶⁹ Brunner, The Family Compass, 60.

character-healthy lives, our children must know the Biblical virtues necessary to make wise choices. In their second principle, the Brunners assert, “Our children can only learn what we teach them in a manner that will reach them.”⁷⁰ Like the other authors quoted, the Brunners believe that regardless of the method employed, parents are responsible to make sure that their children learn the lessons of character and virtue necessary for a successful life.

Mark #4 is the Practice of Training. With a foundation of Biblical truths to instill them with virtuous character, young people are ready to begin the process of responsibility and ownership in their own lives. This practice teaches parents how to equip their children to become fruitful and responsible in a Biblically balanced manner. Not surprisingly, many authors embraced the goal of equipping young people to take responsibility for their own actions and to begin to impact their world through the ownership of their own character-healthy relationship with the Lord.

This writer’s research showed that the desire to see young people embrace responsibility isn’t limited to adults or even parents. Consider this quote from the book, Do Hard Things, by Alex and Brett Harris. “The problem we have is with the modern understanding of adolescence that allows, encourages, and even trains young people to remain childish for much longer than necessary. It holds us back from what we could do, from what God made us to do, and even from what we would want to do if we got out from under society’s low expectations.”⁷¹ These extraordinary young men continue, “This is what we call the Rebelution: throwing off the shackles of lies and low expectations and returning our generation to a true and very exciting understanding of the

⁷⁰ Brunner, The Family Compass, 60.

⁷¹ Harris, Do Hard Things, 33.

teen years-not as a vacation from responsibility but as a launching pad for the rest of our lives.”⁷²

Speaking from another generation, Elisabeth Elliott writes of the responsibility involved in being a member of the family,

Wherever we were there was a balance of work and play. Mother and Dad were never exempt from work-why should we be? We were all members of the family. The worry of some parents, that by requiring work they would be depriving their children of childhood, never crossed our parents’ minds. They would have been amused, I suppose, if anyone had suggested such an idea...And how shall we ever learn to work if we don’t begin in childhood?⁷³

Author Gary Chapman, in his book, Five Signs of a Loving Family, links responsibility with the virtue of service. He follows the progression of service through the growth of the child. Speaking of younger children, Chapman says this,

The idea of service seems almost innate. If the child is allowed to help and affirmed for helping, he or she will likely be a willing worker well into first and second grade. In grades three through six, a child’s attitude of service will be greatly influenced by the models in the family. If the parents have talked about service as a virtue and have helped the child discover ways to serve family members, and if the child is given verbal affirmation for such acts of service, the child will continue to find satisfaction in serving well into adolescence.⁷⁴

This affirmation, by Chapman, of family-centered service, aligns itself with the primary responsibilities found in the growth continuum contained in Mark #4.

Chapman continues, “In the wonderful years of thirteen to eighteen, there will be dramatic changes. If the teenager has internalized an attitude of service, he or she will reach out in many ways beyond the family circle. At school and perhaps at church, such teenagers will tend to be servant leaders. They will spend considerable time helping

⁷² Harris, Do Hard Things, 45.

⁷³ Elliot, The Shaping of a Christian Family, 156.

⁷⁴ Gary Chapman, Five Signs of a Loving Family (Chicago: Northfield, 1997), 23.

others achieve.”⁷⁵ Again, this teaching aligns closely with the secondary responsibilities outlined in the growth continuum.

Sally Clarkson takes this concept of responsibility embraced through service and expands it even further. She writes,

Two equal heartbeats are involved in training our children to serve. The first heartbeat is helping them learn to really see the needs of people they encounter on a daily basis, just as Jesus did. This is partly a matter of taking the time to really pay attention to people, partly a matter of learning to respond to the Holy Spirit’s nudgings. If we ask for and are sensitive to the Spirit’s work in our lives, he will help us be aware of what people need most and how we can help.⁷⁶

In other words, Clarkson believes we must teach our children the responsibility of responding to the Holy Spirit. She goes on,

But the second heartbeat is helping our children develop a willingness to take the initiative and act. This means they may need to overcome feelings of shyness, inadequacy, and laziness. It may mean actually setting aside time in a busy schedule to help others. It definitely means learning to reach past their natural inclinations and to serve whether or not they feel like serving. Giving our children the gift of service, in other words, may well mean interfering with their natural, sinful, or just immature self.⁷⁷

Again, Clarkson’s definition of responsibility, as shown through service, follows the natural progression of the growth continuum found in Mark #4.

Another important aspect of Mark #4 is the understanding of how to teach children to take ownership for their own choices and how to make the appropriate and necessary changes in their own lives to facilitate character-healthy behavior. Lou Priolo,

⁷⁵ Chapman, Five Signs of a Loving Family, 23.

⁷⁶ Sally Clarkson, The Ministry of Motherhood (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2004), 190

⁷⁷ Clarkson, The Ministry of Motherhood, 190.

in his book, The Heart of Anger, outlines the process that parental training takes in teaching children to embrace this ownership principle. He states,

The goal of all this training in righteousness is to develop within your child the ability and desire to bring captive every thought to the obedience of Christ (I Cor. 10:5). As your child learns to speak the truth in his heart (Psalm 15:2) as a matter of habit, he will gain more control over his spirit (Prov. 25:28; 16:32). In Romans 12:2 Paul explains that a Christian is totally transformed by the renewing of his mind. The process whereby this spiritual metamorphosis occurs takes place largely beneath the surface in the heart of each believer. You have not done enough if you simply teach your child simply *how to behave as a Christian*. Your responsibility as a Christian parent is to teach your child *how to think and be motivated as a Christian*, for only thereby can change in behavior be efficacious to the glory of God.⁷⁸

As Mr. Priolo states, as children begin to take responsibility and ownership of their own walk with the Lord, they can then begin to change their behavior in responsible ways that reflect and bring glory to God.

Kurt and Olivia Brunner contrast the difference between today's victim society and the responsible Christian young adult. They assert, "As parents, it is our job to counter this (victim) trend in the lives of our own children. To help them avoid becoming lazy victims, we need to instill in them the what, why, and how of personal responsibility. The second compass value helps equip our children for the realities of life by accepting personal responsibility for their actions and attitudes."⁷⁹ They go on to demonstrate the succinct teaching that parents should provide to their children. "We are responsible for our own actions and attitudes. We must accept the fact that life is difficult for everyone and blaming other people or circumstances for our problems is

⁷⁸ Lou Priolo, The Heart of Anger (Amityville: Calvary Press, 1997) 95.

⁷⁹ Brunner, The Family Compass, 141-142.

foolish. God will bless us as we make right choices.”⁸⁰ This clear and easily understood teaching summarizes the need for young people to become responsible for their own actions.

There was a general consensus, among the writers, that children should progress in their moral development to the point of taking responsibility and ownership for their own actions. All of the authors continued in their agreement that the responsibility for such teaching falls directly unto the shoulders of the parents.

Mark #5 is the Practice of Correction Through Encouragement and Chastisement. This practice encourages parents to utilize teachable moments and to take advantage of moral training opportunities. Through the use of encouragement and verbally clear and unambiguous communication, parents are urged to bring about change in their children’s attitudes and actions. As well, Biblical chastisement is introduced as a motivator for paradigm change in the life of the child.

Gary Chapman explains how these two forms of correction, encouragement and chastisement, fit together,

In the ancient Greek world, two words described the function of parents: teaching and training. The Greek word for teaching is *nouthesia*, which means literally “a putting into the mind.” In the Greek way of thinking, this was done by verbal admonition; thus, teaching by words. The word for training is *paideia*. It is sometimes translated nurture, at other times chastening. To the Greeks, training always involved action. It had both a positive and negative aspect. The nurturing aspect may have involved hugging and kissing a child, whereas the chastening aspect may have involved physically restraining him from danger, but the emphasis in both was taking action. To the Greeks, teaching and training were the two wheels upon which the chariot of child rearing was to roll.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Brunner, *The Family Compass*, 142.

⁸¹ Chapman, *Five Signs of a Loving Family*, 85.

This writer will begin with the process of correction through encouragement. Sally Clarkson defines and delineates the importance of encouraging words in our child training. She writes, “ Encouraging and affirming words-words of life, as I like to call them- have the power to give hope, to strengthen others to keep growing in righteousness. And if I, a grown woman, need them to keep me going through hard times, my children need them even more. Positive words act as water and sunshine to our souls to help them grow strong.”⁸² She later adds, “Words of instruction and training are indeed necessary to our children, but we must be careful not to discourage them through nagging, criticism, and reprimands. Even more important, we must balance our correction with words of encouragement and affirmation, words that our precious little ones will treasure in their hearts throughout their whole lives.”⁸³

Elisabeth Elliott affirms Mrs. Clarkson’s assertions when she writes,

In all of us there is a strong resistance to a forced obedience. Even in an infant we see the stiffened back, the defiant expression. But gentleness, patience, tenderness, and encouragement bring out the best in us.”⁸⁴ She goes on, in speaking of her father, to say this, “It was not his style to be effusive-ever. But we knew when he was pleased, and we treasured his least word of encouragement. He was interested. He was attentive.”⁸⁵

Obviously, for these two writers, encouragement is a foundational necessity in the correction of children.

In commenting on the need for encouragement in our homes, Mary Pride writes this, “Our homes should be our kids’ favorite place to be. If we are warm and encouraging, they will be. Encouragement means telling children how they could do

⁸² Clarkson, *The Ministry of Motherhood*, 41.

⁸³ Clarkson, *The Ministry of Motherhood*, 45.

⁸⁴ Elliot, *The Shaping of a Christian Family*, 141.

⁸⁵ Elliot, *The Shaping of a Christian Family*, 144.

better when needed and remarking upon their accomplishments whenever honesty allows.

You are trying to instill confidence and a desire to do better.”⁸⁶ Paul Tripp refers to this need for continual encouragement as constant communication. He writes,

As parents of teenagers, it is important to realize that these conversations don't just happen. You make them happen by a daily pursuit of your child. This daily pursuit does not have to be negative, something your teenager dreads before it happens and barely tolerates as it's going on. Rather, these times can be loving and encouraging, a habit of your relationship with your teenager that both of you have grown to appreciate.⁸⁷

All of the surveyed authors agreed on the importance of encouragement as a tool in the training and correction of children. Whether the encouragement was verbal or non-verbal, they reiterated the need for children to receive encouragement in a consistent manner.

The other side of correction, the practice of chastisement was also well represented in the writings of parenting experts. In her book, Don't Make Me Count To Three, Ginger Plowman explains the necessity of Biblical chastisement and the proper scenario for such chastisement. She says, “We know from Proverbs 22:15 that foolishness is bound up in the heart of the child and we know that it is the rod of discipline that drives out foolishness...The rod is useful for correcting these areas of foolishness: direct disobedience and defiant attitude.”⁸⁸ Elisabeth Elliot agrees with this necessity for Biblical chastisement writing,

My parents wisely sought to follow, in shaping our behavior, the way God deals with the children He loves. (Psalm 89:30-33) We find in these words the Lord's stern demand for obedience hand-in-hand with the assurance of

⁸⁶ Pride, All The Way Home, 176-177.

⁸⁷ Tripp, Age of Opportunity, 222-223.

⁸⁸ Ginger Plowman, Don't Make Me Count to Three (Wapwallopen: Shepherd Press, 2003), 128.

His changeless love. Punishment and love are far from incompatible. It is not difficult to see why the two things necessarily go together. The father who loves his son desires his growth in wisdom and grace and is therefore willing to correct him, even with a rod if need be.⁸⁹

As these authors assert, the use of Biblical chastisement is always for the end goal of correcting disobedience and attitudes of the heart. Ed Young fine tunes the understanding of Biblical chastisement when he writes this,

Biblical spanking is understood in the context of Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it.” The Hebrew word for “train” in the original text means to “narrow” something. The imagery is that of a shepherd leading his sheep across a broad field. He must keep them on a specific path, lest they wander off into danger. So he uses a rod, not to thrash the sheep, but to prod and coax them back to the defined, narrow path that takes them directly to the sheepfold, water, or grass.⁹⁰

He continues, “It is the worst of shepherds and parents who use the rod to thrash and wound. In doing so, parents actually can bring physical and mental harm to the child. However, properly administered, the gentle, “coaxing” use of the rod can be effective and should be an option.”⁹¹

Ed Young makes an important point in reminding readers that Biblical chastisement is one tool in the parent’s arsenal; not the only tool. Other writers reiterated this important truth. In his book, Making Children Mind Without Losing Yours, Dr. Kevin Leman adds his input regarding the use of Biblical chastisement. “Spanking is a possible option for disciplining our child, but always be sure you are doing it as loving

⁸⁹ Elliot, The Shaping of a Christian Family, 129.

⁹⁰ Young, The 10 Commandments of Parenting, 126.

⁹¹ Young, The 10 Commandments of Parenting, 127.

correction, not in any way that rejects your child.”⁹² He adds, “Like any form of discipline, spanking is more effective when the child feels loved.”⁹³

The importance of cementing the love relationship between parent and child, while still administering Biblical chastisement, found its way into the writings of several authors. Ed Young writes this, “Discipline and punishment are great opportunities to teach children the nature of unconditional love. As they see you love them no matter what, they grow with a healthy attitude toward themselves and others. They grasp the fact that people make mistakes, but, because of Jesus Christ and His grace, there can always be a new beginning.”⁹⁴ Mr. Young continues, “This is the distinctive dimension that biblical truth brings to the entire matter of discipline, and why discipline is an important tool in helping your child develop spiritually as well as emotionally and mentally.”⁹⁵

George Barna strongly agrees that love and discipline are intrinsically linked.

Writing in his book, Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions, he asserts,

One of the most underutilized resources available to parents-and which should be among the most often-used resources- is that of discipline. This form of instruction includes the identification of parameters and expectations, assistance in developing proper habits, situational reprimands and friendly reminders. The Bible makes it quite clear that discipline is an expression of love- and that the failure or refusal to utilize discipline is tantamount to withholding love.⁹⁶

⁹² Kevin Leman, Making Children Mind Without Losing Yours (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 2000), 93.

⁹³ Leman, Making Children Mind Without Losing Yours, 92.

⁹⁴ Young, The 10 Commandments of Parenting, 129.

⁹⁵ Young, The 10 Commandments of Parenting, 129.

⁹⁶ George Barna, Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions (Ventura: Regal, 2003), 88.

Concurrent with the need to demonstrate love in our Biblical chastisement, a majority of the authors also stressed the absolute necessity of consistency in the correction of children. Ginger Plowman constructs the foundation for this consistency with this simple statement, “A good spanking at the end of the day can never make up for the spankings that should have been administered throughout the day.”⁹⁷ Ed Young echoes her belief when he states, “By the way, “consistency” is the most important word in discipline.”⁹⁸

Elisabeth Elliott delineates importance of consistency and the consequences of a lack of consistency when she writes this,

We knew it (the switch) was handy, but because we knew our parents meant exactly what they said the first time they said it, it did not often take more than the raising of Mother’s eyes to the lintel to galvanize us to action. The common but very bad habits of repeating commands and raising the voice not only exhaust the parent’s patience so that he then punishes in anger, but also teach the child that he need not pay attention until he has heard the command many times, and heard it shouted. Examples are all around us of children who pay practically no attention at all.⁹⁹

Gary Chapman adds one final thought on this need for consistency. He says this, “In the loving family, parents give guidance to their children by consistent training from infancy through adolescence. Our own model-intentional or unintentional-is our most effective method of training.”¹⁰⁰

In the writing of H. Clay Trumbull, we find the goal of correction, the reason for encouragement and Biblical chastisement. He summarizes the goal this way,

⁹⁷ Plowman, Don’t Make Me Count to Three, 123.

⁹⁸ Young, The 10 Commandments of Parenting, 128.

⁹⁹ Elliot, The Shaping of a Christian Family, 134.

¹⁰⁰ Chapman, Five Signs of a Loving Family, 119.

Child training properly begins at a child's birth, but it does not properly end there. The first effort in the direction of child training is to train a child to breathe and to swallow; but that ought not to be the last effort in the same direction. Child training goes on as long as a child is a child; and child training covers every phase of a child's action and bearing I life. Child training affects a child's sleeping and waking, his laughing and crying, his eating, and drinking, his looks and his movements, his self-control and his conduct toward others. Child training does not change a child's nature, but it does change his modes of giving expression to his nature. Child training does not give a child entirely new characteristics, but it brings him to the repression and subduing of certain characteristics, and to the expression and development of certain others, to such an extent that the sum of his characteristics presents an aspect so different from its original exhibit that it seems like another character. And so it is that child training is, in a sense, like the very making of a child anew.¹⁰¹

He concludes his thoughts by saying, "Child training includes the directing and controlling and shaping of a child's feelings and thoughts and words and ways in every sphere of his life-course, from his birth to the close of his childhood. And that this is no unimportant part of a child's upbringing, no intelligent mind will venture to question."¹⁰²

All of the authors surveyed agreed wholeheartedly on the need for correction in a child's life, in order to bring about character-healthy development. Whether the correction was through encouragement or Biblical chastisement, there was strong agreement on the need for consistency, loving restoration, and clear direction for the child.

For ease of discussion, Marks #6,7, and 8 will be combined. These marks are the Practices of Repentance, Forgiveness, and Restoration. These imperatives stress the need for parents to embrace these practices themselves as well as teaching their children how to implement these important life skills in their own lives.

¹⁰¹ Trumbull, Hints on Child Training, 3.

¹⁰² Trumbull, Hints on Child Training, 4.

Ed Young begins our discussion on the need to teach our children the how and why of repentance with these words. “After the explanation and spanking comes repentance and forgiveness. Just as the child must connect actions and outcomes, he must be able to link repentance with forgiveness.”¹⁰³ He continues with an explanation of how to teach this practice saying, “It is helpful to teach the child the meaning of repentance as “turning around” and moving in a new, better direction. Lead the child in acknowledging repentance and asking forgiveness of God and any other person affected by the wrong behavior.”¹⁰⁴ Paul Tripp agrees with this need for teaching our children the heart attitudes needed to turn to the Lord with repentant hearts.” He stresses the repetitive nature of this teaching when he writes,

As parents, God has reconciled us to himself so that we would be his ambassadors of reconciliation. It is as though God makes his personal appeal to our teenagers through us! So we seek to lead our teenagers to the Lord with words of confession, with a commitment to repentance, and with hope in the effective work of Christ on the cross. We will not lead them to the Lord just once, but again and again and again, to receive his forgiveness and his help.¹⁰⁵

Once children have learned the important character building skill of repentance, the authors surveyed continued their discussion on the importance of seeking and offering forgiveness. Author Ed Young asserts that an understanding of forgiveness begins with an understanding of God. He writes this, “Show your child that what God forgives He forgets and removes from us, so there is no need for him to continue to walk in guilt.”¹⁰⁶

Sally Clarkson continues to point to this understanding of God when she pens these words,

¹⁰³ Young, The 10 Commandments of Parenting, 129.

¹⁰⁴ Young, The 10 Commandments of Parenting, 129.

¹⁰⁵ Tripp, Age of Opportunity, 228.

¹⁰⁶ Young, The 10 Commandments of Parenting, 129.

I believe we must strive to model that kind of gracious, forgiving love to our children. Of course we must instruct them in righteousness so they will understand the law of righteousness that is written in their hearts. We must teach them what sin is, and we must discipline them appropriately when they knowingly stray. Yet we must also show them, as Christ did for his disciples, what it means to be able to go to the throne of God to receive forgiveness, the cleansing of our hearts, and God's unconditional love.¹⁰⁷

Dr. Kevin Leman agrees with Clarkson regarding the need to teach our children how to approach the task of seeking forgiveness. He explains it this way,

Another important developer of the conscience is the concept of forgiveness. We must be able to teach our children forgiveness and give them opportunities to express their remorse for violations of the family guidelines. And we must be able to express remorse ourselves. The only way we can ever teach a child to say "I'm sorry" is for him to hear it from our lips first. Parents always train up their children in the way they should go by example. Believe me, the old cliché is true: Children pay much more attention to our actions than they do to our words.¹⁰⁸

Lou Priolo, in his book, The Heart of Anger, goes beyond an understanding of the forgiving nature of God, to practical instruction in the life skill of seeking forgiveness. He says this, "Asking forgiveness is not the same thing as saying, "I'm sorry." Saying "I'm sorry" doesn't accomplish the biblical goal of putting past offenses aside. Nor does it lay the foundation to reestablish a broken trust as effectively as does asking forgiveness. When someone asks, "Will you forgive me?", he specifically places the ball in the court of the offended brother."¹⁰⁹ Author Carol Kuykendall further defines what forgiveness is and is not in her book, Five-Star Families. She states, "Forgiving is more than saying sorry, though with children it starts with the habit of saying, "I'm sorry." It means not keeping score and not holding grudges. It means choosing not to bring up the incident

¹⁰⁷ Clarkson, The Ministry of Motherhood, 55.

¹⁰⁸ Leman, Making Children Mind Without Losing Yours, 75-76.

¹⁰⁹ Priolo, The Heart of Anger, 71.

over and over and choosing to move forward beyond the issue. It means making that choice again and again.”¹¹⁰

The final practice we will be considering is the practice of restoration. Restoration completes the cycle of repentance and forgiveness. Many authors commented on the necessity of this mark to ensure the proper character healthy development of children. In explaining how restoration works, author Ed Young wrote this,

It’s important, too, that the child understand why he-and you-are having to experience the pain of discipline. Explain to your little one the reason for the punishment. Help him to make the link between behaviors and consequences. Discipline and punishment are great opportunities to teach children the nature of unconditional love. As they see you love them no matter what, they grow with a healthy attitude toward themselves and others. The grasp the fact that people make mistakes, but, because of Jesus Christ and His grace, there can always be a new beginning. This is the distinctive dimension that biblical truth brings to the entire matter of discipline, and why discipline is an important tool in helping your child develop spiritually as well as emotionally and mentally.¹¹¹

Sally Clarkson agrees with Young’s observations on the power of a parent’s unconditional love following a child’s sin. She makes this point,

Though I desire my children to live righteously and to avoid doing things they know are wrong, I know that they, like me, will fall short of their own and Christ’s standards. I am so thankful Joy can come to me when she has done something wrong. By guiding her to the throne of God, I become like Christ to her as she develops her understanding of how to deal with the reality of sin and guilt. I give her the same gift of grace that has been so crucial in my own life.¹¹²

Edith Schaeffer sums up the absolute necessity of all three steps in Marks #6,7, and 8. She addresses the need this way,

Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth. Husband-wife love, wife-husband love, and

¹¹⁰ Carol Kuykendall, *Five-Star Families* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2005), 161.

¹¹¹ Young, *The 10 Commandments of Parenting*, 129.

¹¹² Sally Clarkson, *Seasons of a Mother’s Heart*, 52-53.

parent-child love-in times of weakness and failure, when forgiveness must be asked for and given, in times when suspicions have been right-love goes on. A child needs to grow up knowing that love never faileth, that not only will Dad and Mom stay together in spite of each of their weaknesses as well as strength, but that the door will always be open, the candle in the window will never go out. Love doesn't say, If you ever do that again, never come home. Love never faileth. Love keeps that door open, the light waiting, and dinner in the oven-for years. This is the love a family demonstrates in its formation center.¹¹³

As these authors clearly agree, correction for character healthy living is important, but repentance, forgiveness, and restoration are equally essential in the development of children. They emphasized teaching children how to repent, guiding them in forgiveness, and then lovingly restoring the parent/child relationship.

The final mark this writer will be evaluating through the writings of parenting experts is Mark #9, The Practice of Practice. This practice teaches parents how to consistently and persistently train children in character-healthy behavior and choices. The writers surveyed all had different priorities in their training paradigms, but these different priorities all pointed to a united end goal of character-healthy children, capable of choosing to elevate virtues over the feelings-driven reactivity of the moment.

Many of the authors were united in stressing the need to teach children dependence on and faith in God. Dr. David Jeremiah states the need this way, "If your son doesn't depend on God with all of his heart, if he doesn't ask God to give him the strength he needs to stand up and be counted, if he doesn't realize that God is his ally and walks with him every day, he will risk a ruined life."¹¹⁴ Strong words, but a sentiment echoed by Paul Tripp as he writes, "We have failed our children if we don't do

¹¹³ Schaeffer, What Is A Family, 80.

¹¹⁴ Jeremiah, Hopeful Parenting, 121.

everything we can to have them leave our homes with a sense of awe over God and the glories of his grace. We cannot relax if our teenagers do not appreciate knowing God, being loved by him, and being chosen to live for his glory.”¹¹⁵

Sally Clarkson, while in agreement with Dr. Jeremiah and Paul Tripp, enlarges the need to teach our children how to live faith-filled, God-dependent lives. She writes, “If we teach our children through our actions or instruction, even subtly, that being successful in this world is somehow a measure of their importance and success, then we will miss the point of all the Lord’s teaching. We are given one chance to live on earth, and the true measure of our success will be our faith, our faithfulness, and our obedience.”¹¹⁶ She goes on to stress the importance of this “faith-teaching” in light of eternity. “As I seek to teach my children all the biblical truths they will need to be equipped for life and also try to model for them a life of faith, eternal truth must always be the foundation of their understanding. If they can keep eternity before their eyes, they will be able to live in hope no matter what happens to them in this life.”¹¹⁷

Clearly, teaching children how to live in faithful obedience to the Lord was uppermost in the minds of many parenting experts. Like Mrs. Clarkson, Ed Young emphasized that teaching children to depend on God will enable them to live successfully in the future. He shares these thoughts,

A child who learns his life is in the hand of God is steady and stable...Children bathed in the knowledge that there is a purpose for their lives and that God is leading them according to plan become settled adults. They draw peace from know all things work together for good to them who love God and are called according to His purpose. They know that

¹¹⁵ Tripp, Age of Opportunity, 172.

¹¹⁶ Clarkson, The Ministry of Motherhood, 105.

¹¹⁷ Clarkson, The Ministry of Motherhood, 105.

purpose is to bring them in Christlikeness within the fallen world. Such stable, secure people go through hard times like everyone else, but they don't give up, because they know all is proceeding according to plan, even if they don't understand it.¹¹⁸

Teen authors Alex and Brett Harris explain what living a life of dependence and faith looks like, in their book, Do Hard Things. Here they share their thoughts on what it means, as a young person, to internalize the character building virtue of faith and trust in God. Speaking of their friend, Alyssa, they say this, "The problem, she told us, was that when she stayed inside her comfort zone, she was essentially refusing to surrender her life fully to God; she was avoiding the hard things He was calling her to do."¹¹⁹ The young men summarize her feeling this way, "What we're really saying is that we don't want to do things that don't come easily or naturally. We don't want to break through our fears. And by our actions, we're also saying that God isn't good and powerful enough to help us do what we can't comfortably do on our own. And that's a lie the Enemy loves."¹²⁰

What these young authors realized, like the older authors before them, was this simple truth. The foundational character building virtue is faith and dependence on God. Without this strong foundation, other virtues will be built on shaky ground and will lack the strength to stand firm.

Whether they are learning to persevere, respect others, be honest, practice diligence, or any of the other virtues listed by the surveyed authors, all of the authors were in agreement on one point. To enable the daily teaching of character-healthy

¹¹⁸ Young, The 10 Commandments of Parenting, 170.

¹¹⁹ Harris, Do Hard Things, 70.

¹²⁰ Harris, Do Hard Things, 71.

behavior and choices, young people must first be taught to trust God and desire to live a virtue filled life of faithful obedience.

George Barna concludes the thoughts on this topic and summarizes accurately the findings of the majority of the parenting experts surveyed. He says this, “No matter what the issue or challenge is that we face, our decision comes down to what we believe is right or wrong, which is based squarely on our sense of truth and purpose.”¹²¹ He continues, “In order for our children to grow into whole and healthy people, we must help them build strong foundations to prepare them for the rest of their lives. Because everything is ultimately a spiritual and moral issue, the more intentional and clear minded we are regarding the spiritual development, the better off they will be for the duration of their lives.”¹²² In other words, Mr. Barna is saying it takes practice to build strong moral foundations in our children’s lives.

Since parenting is a process, it makes sense that the authors in this chapter will not all be in agreement, all of the time, regarding every aspect of character development, but it is also clear, that they share a common understanding that the parent is the primary teacher, trainer, and motivator of character development in the life of the child. Particular parenting philosophies aside, all of the experts in this chapter agreed on the basic tenants of the nine marks of parenting (NPPP) and they were adamant that the role of the parent in the character development of children is absolutely vital to the character-health of the child.

¹²¹ George Barna, Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions (Ventura: Regal, 2003), 30.

¹²² Barna, Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions, 32.

Putting various authors in conversation with each other regarding the role of parents in the character development of children illuminates the need for a more comprehensive approach to parenting. Each of the authors in this chapter were adamant about character development in children and all of the authors added their unique advice to accomplish the same, but each served more like specialized surgeons, highlighting specific aspects of character development, rather than general practitioners concerned with overall wellness. Although, the practice of parental modeling was emphasized by most of the authors, it was not mentioned by all of the authors. Likewise, learning to elevate virtues above feelings was important to some, but not to all. The practice of training was the most agreed upon mark of the writers quoted in this chapter, but not all agreed upon the approach or scope of parental involvement in character training. Finally, surprisingly few of the authors said anything at all about the importance of repentance, forgiveness, and restoration in the parenting process. Those who do write about repentance, forgiveness, and restoration are obdurate regarding its importance. This disparate approach to the various aspects of character training, by the afore mentioned experts clearly serves to underscore the magnitude of the necessity of a comprehensive, easily understood, and practically implemented character driven parenting curriculum. The NPPP is a complete and inclusive program that brings together the specific concerns of the authors in this chapter, while at the same time teaching parents how to systematically approach their children's character-health.

Although this chapter dealt with the feelings, finding, and objectives of various experts, the following chapter instead focuses on real data gathered from actual participants in a Nine Practices of The Proactive Parent Seminar. A comprehensive study

of this topic is incomplete without a merging of expert opinion and statistical findings. Combining the view of expert authors with the practical application of actual parents will provide a thorough evaluation of this church based training program.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODS AND FINDINGS

The research examining the role of parents in the character development of children via a church based training program contained in this chapter was both qualitative and evaluative. It is not the focus of this chapter to evaluate or compare different church based training programs against each other, rather the scope of the research in this chapter is designed to evaluate the formative, and summative response of a tightly controlled test group of parents to the nine marks described in chapter one, also known as, The Nine Practices of The Proactive Parent (NPPP) (See Appendix). Each parent in the test group attended this 18-hour church based training program, over a three-day period. It is their written responses to six research questions that are the focus of this chapter. Some quantitative analysis will be included in this chapter, but it will be limited to measuring percentages of those respondents within the test group regarding their favorable, or unfavorable responses to any of the six research questions.

Research background

The original test group was formed from volunteers who all have a testimony of faith in Christ and are all active church members. The group included 25 individuals who attended the 18-hour course with the following marital and parental status:

- 1 single female with no children
- 1 single female with two children
- 1 single grandmother with three children
- 10 married couples with children

- 1 married couple with no children

The original test group of 25 attended the 18-hour course in April 2008. Six follow-up research questions were administered to the entire group one year later in May 2009. The research questions were administered via paper survey, individually to all group members (See APPENDIX C). They were given one month to return the survey with their written responses to the six research questions included. 19 of the original 25 attendees, (76%) responded in writing to the six questions submitted to them. Of the 76% that responded, 8 were married couples with children, 1 was a married couple without children, and 1 was a single grandmother with three children and four grandchildren. Both of the single mothers remarried and moved out of state after attending the course electing not to respond to the post course research, citing distance and time constraints as reasons for not participating. It was not immediately clear why the remaining non-responders did not participate in the post-course survey.

Regarding the 19 participants in the one year follow-up research:

- The youngest participant was 21 and the oldest was 71
- The average age among participants was 37.8 years old
- The average number of children among those with children was 2.11, (16 female and 21 male)
- The average age of those children was 22.05
- The youngest child was 4 months, and the oldest was 46 years old
- On average, the couples had been married 15 years

Question #1: As a parent, describe your role in the Biblical theological character development of your children.

The aim of this open-ended question was to give the participants an opportunity to contribute a general response to all nine marks taught in NPPP and to measure any shift in thinking from before attending the course and one year later. All of the respondents agreed that the role of parents in the character development of children was primary and vital, several noted that this was a change in thinking generated by the NPPP. Several responders cited a shift in their overall post-course approach to parenting. The most common post-course shift was a shift away from church and school based youth activities. Those activities were replaced by a parent directed approach to character training. In other words, they viewed the role of the parent in the character development of the child more as a parent led initiative and less as an institutional led initiative after attending NPPP. None of the test group thought that the church alone should handle the character development of children although, several of the responses indicated that the church should have a complementary role. One of the younger married mothers described the balance of parental involvement in character development, and the role of the church in the same, this way, "It is my responsibility as a parent to be the primary Biblical theological teacher. We have private devotions each morning, and I see to it that my child reads her Bible. We also read the Bible together every morning after breakfast and discuss what we learned about God. While Sunday School, Awana, and other church programs are important, discipleship in the home is the most important."¹²³ Her statement underscores the general consensus of the respondents regarding the balance between

¹²³ S.R., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

church training and parental involvement when it comes to the character development of children.

In response to this question, parents felt that the use of various teaching techniques and resources were helpful in the character development process. The following items represent the most common answers and are listed in diminishing order from most frequent to least frequent:

- Interjecting Bible truth in general conversation (8 responses)
- Parents responsibility (7 responses)
- Use of the Bible (5 responses)
- Prayer, both private and corporate (5 responses)
- Personal testimony (5 responses)
- Leadership and mentoring (5 responses)
- Devotional reading other than Bible (for example, *Pilgrim's Progress* etc...) (4 responses)
- Utilizing church resources (3 responses)
- Creating a spiritual atmosphere in the home (2 responses)

Regarding the use of teaching techniques and resources, one test group mother said,

My role as a parent is to bring my children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That means I am to teach them about God, His character, His ways, and what He requires of us. I accomplish this through maintaining my walk with the Lord, by intentionally teaching Biblical truth, and by providing them opportunities and resources for more learning and growth in our church family.¹²⁴

The opportunities and resources that she mentioned are reflective of the general consensus of the 19 respondents.

¹²⁴ S.F., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

In summary, the respondents' answers to question #1 were reflective of their acceptance of at least six of the nine marks taught in the NPPP. The strength of the training was evident in how the test group embraced the practices of modeling, elevating virtues above feelings, building moral muscle, training, and correction (Marks 1-5), in the follow-up research questionnaire. However, a limitation of the training is evident, in that none of the 19 parents in the test group mentioned repentance, forgiveness, or restoration as teaching techniques or resources necessary for the proper character development of children. They did not list repentance, forgiveness, or restoration (Mark 6,7, and 8), as being instrumental to the Biblical theological character development process, even though it was clearly presented, as such, in the NPPP.

Question #2: Do children naturally develop moral character through daily life experience alone? (Explain).

This was not simply a Yes or No question, rather, the test group was asked to elaborate (explain) their thoughts regarding the origin of their child's moral character development.

The respondents were split on their responses to this question. 12 responded in the negative, while 7 responded in the affirmative. Upon first review, it would seem that at least one-third of the test group thought that children developed good moral character from daily environmental influences alone. To make this assumption would be misleading. Those who responded in the affirmative, all made the point that any moral development that occurred from daily environmental influences was almost always poor development. One of the fathers who answered, "Yes," wrote this response,

Yes, I think daily life experience will yield a moral character of sorts, but not the sort we desire them to have. The desired Christian moral character, however, will not happen inadvertently. That must be a continuous conscious effort by Christian parents. If simply left to daily life experience, the moral character that will develop will be one without many of our core Christian values.¹²⁵

The group was in agreement that the main responsibility for a child's character development falls upon the parents.

Those who responded in the negative, indicated original sin and immaturity among the main reasons they thought a child did not develop good moral character through daily life experiences. Most stated that the parent should be the primary model for Godly moral character. Several respondents cited Deuteronomy 6 as their primary text for Biblical parenting, reinforcing the role of parents in the good moral character development of children.

A younger mother with three children answered "No," and explained her answer this way,

Only if an adult (parent) is around to apply Biblical principles to their daily life experiences will children develop moral character. In young children, for instance, sharing is a key concept that takes years to develop. They most certainly do not do it of their own volition. If small children were left to their own devices, it would be the will of the strongest that prevailed, with the rights of the little ones trampled upon. Parents therefore, must work with the children on being kind, making sure others are treated fairly, and using God's Word as the guideline for correct behavior.¹²⁶

Many of the nine marks from chapter one are reflected in her answer. She clearly details the role of the parent in the character development of children. According to this mother, the parent is the one who initiates moral training. She uses sharing as an example of a character trait that does not occur naturally among children and must be taught by the

¹²⁵ D.S., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

¹²⁶ A.S., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

parent. She broadens her observation to include the need for the parent to introduce kindness, fairness, and the use of God's Word into the life of the child. Another respondent emphasized that building a spiritual atmosphere within the home would aid in imparting good moral character to their children.

Overall, all respondents were in agreement that good moral character development is not developed naturally, but it must be part of a didactic intervention on the part of the parent with the help of the church. The support of the Church was viewed as helpful by most of the respondents. None of the test group thought that the church alone was responsible for the character development of children. Those who mentioned the church in their response did so to reflect their own need for spiritual growth and the safe and supportive environment that the church creates for their children to grow and develop spiritually.

In summary, the test group was united on their response to this question. The "Yes" and "No" groups chose different approaches to arrive at the same conclusions. All 19 participants were agreed that children do not naturally develop good or God pleasing character without parental input. They were also in agreement that church should play a supportive role in the character development of children.

Upon further review it seems that much of the ambiguity in response to this question stems from the poorly worded nature of the question itself. Perhaps a better question would have been, "Do children naturally develop *good* moral character through daily life experience alone? (Explain)."

Question #3: Why is the moral character development of your children important?

Explain.

One of the main tenets of the NPPP was the emphasis placed upon the importance of proper moral character development in children. The role of parents in the character development of children as taught in the NPPP was the aim of the first two test group questions. Question #3 is designed to dig a little deeper. Since this is the only “Why” question in the research batch, it garnered the most diverse response of the six questions.

Since all of the 19 respondents have agreed that good moral character development is important, that the primary responsibility of that training falls to the parent, and that it is not the result of some naturally occurring phenomenon, it seemed appropriate to give the test group an opportunity to explain in their own words why good moral character development is important. Some common themes occurred in their answers to the question.

The most common responses (Why is the moral character development of your children important? Explain.) are summarized into general categories and listed below:

- Children must learn Biblical right and wrong (8 responses)
- A fulfilled life is a Godly life (8 responses)
- Moral character builds a Godly heritage (7 responses)
- Early bad habits are hard to change (5 responses)
- Moral character development in children glorifies God (5 responses)
- Children must learn to submit to authority (3 responses)
- Moral character makes it easier to learn responsibility (3 responses)
- Moral character makes for better family relationships (2 responses)

- Moral character makes children better prepared to serve God. (2 responses)
- Moral character enhances the child's testimony (2 responses)

The majority emphasized that a Godly life is a satisfying and fulfilling life. They agreed that teaching their children to differentiate right from wrong (morally speaking) was important in achieving the Godly life. Here is why good moral character development was so important to one mother,

I want to instill in them a desire to do the right thing. After all, there is no other way to teach what the right thing is, unless you use the Bible as the foundation of right and wrong. I want them to grow into responsible adults who love the Lord and treat people with respect and love. I want them to have a fulfilling life, which, if they are focused on doing God's will for their lives, they will have. They need to learn to submit to authority and to realize that they are not the be-all-end-all of humanity. I want them to escape this present era of narcissism with a sense of humility intact.¹²⁷

Helping children understand Biblical standards for right and wrong that lead to responsible moral and ethical behavior was the most frequent reason given for why moral character development is so important among the respondents.

Not surprisingly, almost as many respondents were as concerned with the moral wellbeing of the next generations. 7 of the 19 participants cited building a future heritage as "Why" good moral character development was so important. However, building a future Godly heritage seemed to be more of a concern among the mothers than it was among the fathers since all seven respondents were women. It is difficult to provide a definitive explanation for the disparity between mothers and fathers regarding this issue, but it may be a gender bias, in that men, in general, are less concerned about generational relationships than woman or it could be that mothers are more inclined to think about the nuances of the family identity, since they spend a disproportionate amount of time with

¹²⁷ A.S., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

the family when compared to the most fathers. However, this discrepancy highlights a potential flaw in the NPPP teaching. Although, building a strong family identity and therefore a Godly heritage is emphasized as a shared responsibility between father and mother in the course material, it appears that mothers alone identified with this task and fathers did not.

One mother answered question #3 this way, “Moral character development is important for the family, so that we can have strong relationships and function well together and to provide a future heritage for the next generation.”¹²⁸ Her answer was characteristic of several of the test group mothers who saw moral character development as a necessary component of passing Christ and Christian values to the next generation and beyond.

The next most common response to question #3 was that developing good moral character in our children brings glory to God. One father said, “The development of good moral character in my child glorifies God, in that, as Christians our children possess the moral character the culture expects.”¹²⁹ At first, it seems as though this father’s response is somewhat unexpected. He makes reference to the culture “expecting” good moral character from Christian children, yet, it seems as though the prevailing culture actively discourages Christians from being distinctly Christian. Although I cannot answer for this father, it is this writer’s contention that no disparity exists, in that, non-Christians by their very nature discourage overtly Christian behavior, yet, at the same time, they hope for and even hold Christians to the highest levels of moral character. One female respondent said, “Moral character gives them (children) more of an opportunity to serve God which,

¹²⁸ S.F., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

¹²⁹ K.R., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

in turn helps build the fruit of the Spirit which, brings joy to their hearts and ultimately glorifies God.”¹³⁰ Both of these parents are describing the process of moral character development in terms of its fundamental goal of bringing glory to God.

Parents also saw the moral character development of their children as an important activity to prevent the early development of bad moral behavior. A mother of three children said, “Without moral character development, our children will be influenced / molded to fit the ‘character’ of the world. As a Christian, this is important because I want my children to develop Godly character. It is easier to impart these moral lessons while my children are young.”¹³¹ One of the older mothers in the test group with grown children said, “To instill moral character development in children gives them a basis on which to make Godly choices later in life. By teaching and modeling what is Godly and Biblical encourages them to practice that behavior. Soon, it becomes a habit, a way of life, that in time makes it easier and easier for them to chose Biblical ways.”¹³² Arguably, this father summed up the need for early character development when he wrote, “Once the moral character is formed, it is bound by a kind of moral inertia. After that, moral changes can occur, but only through great effort or miraculous change. So, as Christian parents in a fallen world, it is imperative that we do what it takes to get it right the first time.”¹³³ All of these parents are saying the same thing, that is, it is important for parents to be instrumental in the moral character development of their children and the earlier the better.

¹³⁰ E.G., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

¹³¹ S.S., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

¹³² J.E., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

¹³³ D.S., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

In summary, even with the open-ended nature of this question the test group responded in surprising agreement. Chief among their reasons for the importance of good moral character development in their children was the need for their children to know right from wrong. Equally, parents cited a Godly and fulfilling quality of life as incentive for moral character development, followed closely by, bringing glory to God and building a multi-generational family heritage. Each of the 19 test group responses was consistent with the lessons taught in the NPPP.

Question #4: What Biblical principles are necessary for the proper moral development of your children?

The response to this question covered a broad range of answers. The top responses to this question included introduction of the Gospel to children early in life, Biblical principles taught in daily life, and stable family structure. Quantitatively, the responses are as follows:

- The Gospel (7)
- Biblical study (5)
- Family structure (4)
- The 10 Commandments (3)
- Forgiveness (3)
- Chastisement (3)
- The principle of Put-on/Put-off (2)
- Love (2)
- Service (2)

- Shema (2)
- Followed by humility, prayer, the golden rule, fruit of the spirit, and obedience (1)

Although, it is true that all Biblical principles ought to be important in the character development of children this question was formed to force the test group to set priorities. One father put it this way, “This question prompts me to ask, what Biblical principles are not necessary?” He continues, “The list is exhaustive, however, I think primarily children need to understand salvation and reconciliation with God, what it means or looks like to live out a holy life, and lastly, how to love one another, which is a very multi-faceted principle.”¹³⁴ His response was consistent with the majority. Most felt it important to ensure that their children hear and respond to the Gospel in faith. One mother put it this way, “Moral training is impossible apart from salvation.”¹³⁵

Not surprisingly, Bible study was the second highest response. Parents saw Bible intake as necessary to the proper moral development of their children. In fact, those who did not mention Bible study specifically, all listed Bible principles as vital to the task of character development. One young mother said, “Without the Bible, there is no sure compass for right and wrong. The Bible sets the standard for what the proper morals are. Principles such as honesty, hard work, integrity, respect, and selflessness are themes in the Bible and absolutely necessary for proper moral character development of my children.”¹³⁶

All of the respondents listed one or more of the NPPP as an aid in administering Biblical principles for moral character development to their children. Almost all, 17 of 19

¹³⁴ D.E., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

¹³⁵ J.B., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

¹³⁶ S.R., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

in the test group connected the importance of elevating virtues above feelings (Mark #2), to the necessity of teaching Biblical principle to their children. Most notable among the responses to this question was the importance of forgiveness as a Biblical principle. Several of the responses listed forgiveness as instrumental to the process of moral character development. One woman elaborated, “I desire to have my children learn to be ‘givers’ not selfish or greedy. To be loving, others’ focused, and humble they must learn to put-off the old man and put-on the new man with the help of forgiveness.”¹³⁷ Her answer is significant because it is consistent with at least two other responders to this question, and it is the first time any of the 19 test group members listed forgiveness (Mark #7), as being vital to the proper moral character development of children.

Question #5: What role do encouragement and discipline play in the intentional formation of character? Explain.

All 19 of the test group respondents were in agreement regarding their responses to this question. They all felt that encouragement and discipline were vital components in the moral character development of children. However, their responses drew attention to a limitation in the NPPP course material. The majority of respondents delineated between discipline and encouragement. They saw discipline as a negative way to reinforce values, while they viewed encouragement as a more positive verbal way to reinforce moral character development. They also viewed discipline as a means of last resort, instead of a viable first response to character correction. One father summed up the prevailing

¹³⁷ E.G., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

response this way, “You want to encourage good behavior and discourage bad behavior. Proper discipline is the best way to discourage bad behavior.”¹³⁸

A mother of three expanded on the separation of discipline and encouragement with this statement, “Encouragement and discipline must both be used to shape character. To have one and not the other would be ineffective.”¹³⁹ Her understanding to this point is in keeping with the NPPP course material, but she strays from the material as she continues, “I believe they both will reach a child’s heart. Discipline is for training. It limits wrong behavior and guides into correct ones. It teaches a child to use good behavior out of the fear of punishment. Encouragement on the other hand, is more positive and rewards good behavior already performed. It reinforces a love of virtue. The child must have this in order to become a person who will govern themselves.”¹⁴⁰

Several others in the group responded in a similar manner. They did not see discipline as encouraging. They did see verbal affirmation as encouraging, but they did not see discipline such as spanking, social restriction, or loss of privilege as a form of encouragement. This exposes a major flaw in the NPPP since one of the course objectives was to train parents in the inter-linking connection between discipline and encouragement. Discipline, in all of its forms, throughout the NPPP is presented as a form of encouragement and not as an alternative to encouragement.

One father broke it down by age. He viewed discipline as something useful for younger children, while encouragement was viewed as only useful for older children,

When a child is young, discipline teaches obedience and guides them in the right direction. Discipline is easier for a child to understand when they

¹³⁸ J.Y., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

¹³⁹ S.F., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

¹⁴⁰ S.F., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

are young. When they grow older, encouragement plays the greater role in the process of developing moral character because, for the most part, the foundation of morals has been constructed, but encouragement is necessary to keep them focused on why it is important to have strong moral character.¹⁴¹

This father, like many of the other respondents who differentiated discipline from encouragement by age, considered discipline something for younger children, and encouragement something for older children.

It is this writer's view that the test group respondents linked chastisement (a form of discipline) with discipline in general, and divorced chastisement from any form of encouragement. Although, the aim of the NPPP is to connect all forms of encouragement to all forms of discipline and vice versa, it is clear that the presentation of the material fell short of that mark.

Apart from the unintended separation of discipline from encouragement, the vast majority of respondents viewed discipline and encouragement as instrumental in the proper character development of children. The respondents viewed the role of encouragement and discipline as follows:

- 19 of 19 responded that verbal encouragement was vital to the proper character development of children
- 12 of 19 responded that discipline (chastisement) was vitally important.
- 10 of 19 felt that verbal discipline was significant
- 6 of 19 viewed clear and unambiguous instruction by the parent to the child as very important to the character development of the child
- 2 of 19 listed "standards" as important

¹⁴¹ D.B., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

- 1 of 19 listed prayer as a necessary component in the character development process

Question #6: How can the church best equip parents to raise morally competent children? Describe.

The majority sentiment to this question was that parents needed to be trained first, before children could be trained adequately. Many of those who responded were looking for a family orientation in the church based training. The hope among the test group was that the church would aid them to create a unified parenting community among the members of the local body of believers. Classes for children were barely mentioned, leading one to believe that this group did not consider the conventional “program driven” church training paradigm adequate for the character-healthy development of children.

Most of the parents believed that family unity was very important to the proper character development of children. One mother put it this way, “Don’t separate families to create artificial sub-cultures in the church.” She also echoed the sentiment of the group when she wrote, “Create an environment within the church that allows the older parents to teach the younger parents.”¹⁴² Most of the responders viewed segregation of children as a detriment not an asset to proper character development.

Regarding the character-healthy development of children, the role of the church was viewed from a community perspective, whereas, the church is a necessary community of likeminded believers first; then a sub-group of committed parents secondly. One father viewed the role of the church in this manner, “The church as a

¹⁴² M.S., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

whole, must be like the parent, encouraging virtues in the membership through Godly example and behavior, at the same time encouraging parents to equip their own children to live according to the same precepts.”¹⁴³

Many parents saw the role of the church in equipping parents to raise morally competent children as a very important and urgent endeavor. One mother wrote,

I think also that a church that presents parenting in a serious light helps parents to realize that it is the most serious undertaking in life. The approach of the church to the character development of children encourages parents to seriously contemplate the long-term impact of their various parenting philosophies. Also, the church ought to reiterate the importance and responsibility of the parents’ role in raising moral adults. It is not the role of the church to raise children. The church should be a help to parents, not a substitute for parents.¹⁴⁴

The response to this question painted a picture of the church as a community for encouragement through instruction. The quantitative response to this question is listed below:

- Training of parents (10)
- Mentoring of parents (5)
- Unity in parenting (4)
- Family orientation (4)
- Instruction (3)
- Suggestion (3)
- Advice (3)

¹⁴³ J.Y., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

¹⁴⁴ A.S., NPPP Follow-up Research Questionnaire, May 2009.

Although, the church was seen as necessary, the parents surveyed strongly suggested that again, responsibility for morally healthy children rests squarely on the shoulders of parents, not in any outside establishment.

Concluding Thoughts

In conclusion, the parents surveyed not only understood, but also embraced the truth that parenting is directly the responsibility of parents. As a group the respondents found NPPP an invaluable resource and tool that built confidence, encouraged seriousness of mind, and instilled hope and a purpose for their parenting now, and into the future. As a group they viewed the role of the parent in the character development of children as a primary role, as well, they recognized the urgency necessary in the character development of children.

None of the parents in the survey group saw virtuous moral character development occurring naturally without intervention on the part of the parent. Although the test group was widely spread regarding the specific Biblical principles necessary to develop character-healthy children, none of the respondents suggested alternatives to Biblical input.

The largest disparity among the survey respondents was in regard to the role that encouragement and discipline play in the character development of children. Most of those surveyed differentiated encouragement from discipline viewing the former as positive reinforcement of moral values and the latter as negative reinforcement of the same. Altogether, the respondent's felt that the comprehensive child training provided

through the NPPP consistently produced peaceful and supportive family relationships in a character-healthy environment.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUTCOMES, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In his book, The Fulfilled Family, Dr. John MacArthur says, “It is no mere accident of history that family relationships have always been the very nucleus of all human civilization. According to Scripture, that is precisely the way God designed it to be. And therefore, if the family crumbles as an institution, all civilization will ultimately crumble along with it.”¹⁴⁵ Dr. MacArthur’s strong words of warning sound the same battle cry that George Barna trumpeted in his book, Revolutionary Parenting, when he described the lack of character development in America’s children as a crisis.¹⁴⁶ If MacArthur and Barna are to be believed, the devastating consequences of this looming crisis can only be stemmed by the diligent and concerted effort of dedicated parents, prepared to do whatever is necessary, to raise a new and character-healthy generation.

Unlike what is seen as the norm today, children are in desperate need of parent initiated, Bible-based, character training. With the assistance of the church, families must train children to live character-healthy lives. This training will not happen by accident, but must follow a consistent and well thought out course of action. Although not comprehensive, the Nine Practices of The Proactive Parent, detailed in this thesis-project, will provide parents with the hands on tools necessary to prevail in the all-important task of parenting.

¹⁴⁵ John Macarthur, The Fulfilled Family, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), xii.

¹⁴⁶ George Barna, Revolutionary Parenting (Carol Stream: BarnaBooks, 2007), 8-10.

In a world, where rock stars and sports heroes actively woo our children to imitate and emulate their lifestyles, parents who intentionally incorporate The Nine Practices of The Proactive Parent (NPPP) will develop character-healthy children who will be less easily swayed by the lure of modern culture and better able to raise the standard of Biblical living in their own spheres of influence. Beginning with practice #1, each of the Nine Practices becomes a stepping-stone and a marker, not only to the next practice, but also to the further growth of character, necessary in the life of every child.

The Practice of Modeling is concerned with establishing right models or paradigms and rejecting wrong models or paradigms. It poses and answers important questions such as; “What is a paradigm?” “What shapes our paradigms?” and “What are the factors that cause paradigms to change?” This practice also details four phases that are common to the process of change and growth. In addition, the practice of modeling identifies faulty parenting assumptions and offers Biblically acceptable parenting alternatives. Parents, who model Biblical character for their children, can expect to be imitated by their children, thus setting the stage for the next practice, The Practice of Learning to Elevate Virtues Above Feelings.

This important second practice details the importance of virtues and values. It equips parents to identify Biblical character qualities that are essential to the proper training of Christian children; character qualities such as: honesty, integrity, love, respect, trust, discipline, compassion, and so on. The very character qualities that the test group in the previous chapter considered so important to the proper character health of their children. Teaching children to elevate virtues above feelings, also teaches parents how to replace reactivity, with pro-activity in the parenting model, and very importantly,

instructs parents how to instill a love of virtue into the hearts of their children. Once parents consistently model the proactive practice of elevating virtues above feelings to their children, they will then be ready to move on to the next practice, The Practice of Developing Moral Muscle.

This third practice enables parents to teach children how to make morally and Biblically consistent decisions. It introduces parent and child to the three main components of the decision-making process; namely the mind, the heart, and the moral conscience. This practice also contrasts the two most common decision-making alternatives and teaches parents how to train children to elevate Godly virtue above feelings driven reactivity. Even though they had different backgrounds and parenting styles, all of the parents in the test group and all of the authors that this writer encountered, agreed upon one thing, they all agreed on the need for consistency on the part of the parent. Once consistent modeling of elevating virtues above feelings results in moral muscle development in the child, the child will then be ready to take responsibility for their own actions and ultimately, they will be ready to take on the next practice, The Practice of Training.

This Practice of Training highlights the essential virtues of responsibility, compassion and justice. It also teaches parents how to equip children to take ownership of their own choices. A growth/responsibility continuum is outlined in this practice, which will enable parent and child to become fruitful and responsible, in a Biblically balanced manner. Standing, walking, and running all require balance. Likewise, a Character-healthy walk with Christ requires Biblical balance. Once the child is equipped with the training necessary for them to balance their own walk with Christ, they require

nothing more than encouragement and correction to continue on to the next practice, The Practice of Correction Through Encouragement and Chastisement.

This essential practice encourages parents to take advantage of moral training opportunities. Parents are introduced to the Biblical mandate for positive reinforcement and the importance of clear and unambiguous instruction, from parent to child. This practice builds upon all previous practices and delineates the time and place for Biblically balanced chastisement, as a motivator for paradigm change in the life of the child. This practice refines the parenting model to help parents differentiate between immature and childish or immoral and foolish behavior on the part of their children. As the child takes ownership of the moral decision-making process, the role of the parent changes from trainer to coach. During this phase, the parent trains less from a position of authority and more from a position of influence and example, making the final three practices even more imperative.

The Practices of Repentance, Forgiveness, and Restoration are based upon the Luke 17 model. These practices teach parents the absolute importance of seeking and receiving repentance, granting and receiving forgiveness, and restoring relationships in a timely way. Without these useful tools, parents risk losing the moral authority to coach their older children. The mature parent/coach who seeks forgiveness from those he/she has offended (including their children) will preserve the moral authority to complete the important task of character development.

The final practice, The Practice of Practice, reminds parents that character-healthy parenting is a process. This practice is essential because it teaches parents how to consistently and persistently teach into character issues with their children. The Christian

parenting process is not a once and done type of approach to raising children, rather it is the consistent and relentless pursuit of moral excellence, that day-by-day, hour-by-hour, and year-by-year, will eventually bring about character-healthy renewal, in the spirit of Proverbs 22:6.

With these outcomes in mind, several conclusions can be drawn. In his book, To Change The World, James Davison Hunter discusses the possibility of cultural transformation in the late modern world, as he poses the question “So, how should Christians engage the world?” His answer is revealing and enlightening, “For one, it should be clear at this point that good intentions are not enough to engage the world well. The potential for stupidity, irrationality, cruelty, and harm is just as high today as it has ever been in the past. God save us from Christians who are well-intentioned, but not wise!”¹⁴⁷ It is clear from Hunter’s exhortation, that wisdom is indispensable when it comes to change.

Character-healthy transformation, in the spirit of Romans 12:1-2, requires much more than good intentions, it requires wisdom. Further, good contextual exegesis of God’s Word is vital to wise counsel. The test-group of parents from the previous chapter agreed with this conclusion. It was their opinion that left to themselves, their children would never become wise character-healthy leaders, but instead, ran the risk of becoming well-intentioned, but unwise Christians.

For this writer, the study of various parenting experts and the input of Nine Practices participants provided a launch pad for further development and fine-tuning of Parenting Matters: The Nine Practices of the Pro-Active Parent. Although the course, as

¹⁴⁷ James Davison Hunter, To Change The World (New York: Oxford Press, 2010), 276.

it was originally presented, includes the necessary materials to provide parents with a strong foundation for parenting, which in turn will provide a strong foundation of character for their children, the original teaching exhibited some areas of weakness and perhaps, ambiguity.

For example, one of the most important elements of the course is the emphasis on a strong and healthy family dynamic. This writer's intention was to emphasize the necessity of father's embracing the responsibility for building this culture in their own homes. From the course surveys, it became abundantly clear that although the teaching on family dynamic was included in the course, the way in which this material was presented caught the attention of mothers, much more so than fathers. This was evidenced by the fact that only mothers commented on the importance of a family dynamic.

This writer feels there are viable ways to address this problem area. First, and most easily implemented, would be a break-out session during the Nine Practices seminar. In a session with just the fathers present, the material could be presented in a man-to-man matter, handing the responsibility to the men as the leaders for character development in their homes. In addition, an addendum to the Nine Practices workbook, containing practical methods for fathers to use in emphasizing the family dynamic, would provide a hands-on way for fathers to embrace this important role.

A second area of concern in the NPPP is the lack of importance placed on the repentance, forgiveness, and restoration model. While the other practices are easily implemented, this practice requires parents to humble themselves, as they are dealing with their children. Although this humbling process did not seem to be embraced by the

parents surveyed, this writer believes it is of utmost importance and a foundational precept of the NPPP. Perhaps, moving this section from the end of the seminar to a more preeminent position would increase the importance placed upon this practice. In addition, role-playing during the seminar, would give parents the opportunity to “practice” what the repentance, forgiveness, and restoration model actually looks like in real-life situations.

While developing this thesis, the importance of ministry to single mothers became more and more obvious. Although the single mothers involved in the post course survey did not take the time to answer the questions presented, their presence in the class underscored some necessary teaching. As a result of the interactions with the single mothers, this writer has already added some necessary components to the existing Nine Practices conference. At the beginning of each conference, it is now presented and underscored that the concepts being taught are just as important for those who are parenting in a single-family home as for those parenting in a traditional home.

This new teaching emphasizes the foundational concept that single parents, and mothers in particular, are truly not parenting alone. For those with a relationship with Jesus Christ, God the Father is preeminent in the role of the father or missing mother, in a single-parent home. For the single-mothers, reminding them that God is indeed, the perfect Father has already had positive results, as evidenced by post-seminar feedback. In addition, teaching the mothers to enact many of the actions recommended in the Nine Practices, but with the Lord instead of a human husband, has freed these women and given them hope for the future. These women have shared, with this writer, the relief they feel after attending a Nine Practices Seminar.

In addition to the extra conference teaching, an addendum or extra resource expounding on helpful tools for the single parent will be added to the curriculum. Tools such as: utilizing their pastor, bringing God into the discussion, and spending quality time in their own spiritual relationship, should equip these parents to experience greater success in their parenting endeavor.

Perhaps the most troubling area of confusion, that surfaced in the surveys of the respondents, regarding the Nine Practices curriculum, was the misunderstanding of the complementary nature of encouragement and discipline. The intent of the teaching was to emphasize the necessity to integrate these two basic components of discipleship, to pave the way for developing a character-healthy child. The respondents, as a group, saw the two concepts as mutually exclusive. This is a troubling response and will require greater emphasis both in the seminar teaching and the actual NPPP curriculum. What seemed self-evident to this writer was a foreign teaching to the seminar respondents. Perhaps this is a cultural or age issue, but regardless, to reach the goal of character-health in children, both encouragement and discipline must be employed as a means of training. To address this issue, this writer will emphasize the comingling of both concepts in his further teaching.

The initial concept of the NPPP was formulated because of what this writer saw as a lack of understanding, or a misunderstanding, of what morally correct decision-making actually looked like. As participants in the seminar were forced to consider what elements composed character-healthy decision-making, the initial belief, held by this author was vindicated. The parents involved in the seminars, and in particular, those who responded in the post-course survey, made it clear that until they were able to make morally correct

decisions themselves, they would be unable to teach their children to do so. It is this writer's contention, that the lack of moral training and the strong, and distracting emphasis on self-esteem and physical health and safety, that has prevailed in our culture for many years, has produced parents who feel inadequate to fulfill the task of character training. The NPPP, therefore, becomes a bridge to span the gap between parents, who must learn how to make character-healthy choices themselves, and their children, whom they are training to be the next generation of character-healthy leaders.

As an aid to continue and enhance the teaching received at a Nine Practices seminar, this writer has added a post-course tool. Twice monthly conference calls, with the curriculum writer, provide parents, who are utilizing the materials, to ask pertinent questions and to receive counsel to help them use the aforementioned materials in the most beneficial way possible. For the attendees who are uncomfortable asking a question themselves, listening to other's questions will provide direction and confidence to their parenting. As well, the conference calls are recorded and available for further reference.

Although the course requires some additional fine-tuning, the NPPP has proven itself, as recorded in the course surveys, to be a useful and easily implemented character training course. The goal of well-equipped and confident parents has been met and affirmed by the seminar attendees.

As a final concluding thought, as parents intentionally develop character-healthy young adults, our homes, churches, communities, and ultimately world, will be impacted and changed for the cause of Christ. The mandate and promise of such transformation sounds forth from the voice of the prophet Jeremiah,

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, 'Build houses and live in them; and

plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease. Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.’ (Jeremiah 29:4-7)

To put it even more succinctly, Proverbs 22:6 reminds us, “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.” The next greatest generation must be a character-healthy generation. The hard work and diligence of today’s parents is the key to the successful outcome for tomorrow’s character-healthy leaders.

APPENDIX A

PARENTING MATTERS

Raising The Next
Generation of Character
Healthy Children

The Nine Practices of The Proactive
Parent

Taught By

Steve and Megan Scheibner

Chapter One

“Beginning With the End in Mind”

The practice of establishing the right paradigm

Q. What is your purpose in having children?

Q. What is your purpose in raising them?

A. We parent to _____ an audience of One... God!

When it comes to parenting there is no shortage of opinions out there about the right and wrong way to raise a child. There are dozens of magazines dedicated to nothing but parenting advice. There are hundreds of books by so-called experts giving you their tips on raising the well adjusted child. Given the total volume of material available to us, it would seem reasonable to assume that parents as a whole should be better equipped than ever before at raising their children, yet we know that things have never been worse. Why? To be honest, much if not most of the advice presented by psychologists, sociologists, and M.D.'s comes from a humanistic perspective. It is not that these folks intend to give bad advice it is simply that the worldview from which they give counsel is man centered and not God centered. Hence, most of what they teach is self focused, self centered, and often self-destructive. Our children are not suffering from a lack of self-esteem. In fact, most children and adults spend far too much time thinking about themselves and far too little time thinking about anyone else. So, the time has come to reject the self-esteem model and embrace a biblical model.

Our purpose in this course is to train _____, not to train children.

The Bible spells out three imperatives for the parent. Let's call these three imperatives the Three Pillars of Parenting. These Pillars are:

- 1) The Pillar of consistently elevating virtues above feelings
- 2) The Pillar of making God look great...and
- 3) The Pillar of training up children who will be a blessing to those whom they meet.

The Pillars of making God look great and raising children that are a blessing to others are found in Matt. 22:36-39:

And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Here Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" His response is to quote Deut. 6:5 "to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your soul, and all of your might". However, Jesus doesn't stop there, to their surprise, He takes it a step further and adds, "to love your neighbor as yourself." He says nothing about self-esteem, self-actualization or even self-awareness. The purpose behind such a statement is to get us to stop thinking about ourselves and to start thinking about God and our fellow man. When it comes to proper parenting, the Bible has a great deal to say about being oriented to the needs of others. Therefore, we are to raise our children according to this model and reject the humanistic self-focus model.

In order to establish such a practice of proactive parenting, two concepts are of primary importance. First, we must determine our goals in parenting i.e. begin the parenting process with the end in mind. Secondly, we must recognize and reject the wrong models and parenting paradigms that keep us from achieving the goals we have just established, while at the same time initiating the right models, which will enable us to reach those goals. This transition is really very easy if you understand the principle of Ephesians 4:22-25. Simply stated, God wants us to be changing to be more like His Son, by putting off the old man and putting on the new man, as a result of

renewed thinking in Christ. Proper parenting is the process of shedding (putting off) the old paradigms and putting on the new paradigms as a result of renewed thinking.

Beginning with the end in mind means that as parents we must have an idea of what we want the final result of our parenting efforts to look like before we ever begin. It is true that those who aim at nothing hit it every time. We don't want to parent out of the feelings driven needs of the moment rather, we want to parent with a specific goal in mind. The goals we set for both ourselves, and our children must be Bible based and directly connected to our Three Pillars of Parenting. Too often, we begin the venture of parenting with faulty models and misguided goals. The more faulty the parenting model, the higher the level of frustration and anxiety on the part of the parent and child. Let's unpack together what beginning with the end in mind is all about.

Establishing the Right Paradigm

Practice #1

The Practice of Modeling

Paradigms

What is a paradigm?

A paradigm is a _____ or road _____ by which we negotiate life. Each of us has many paradigms. We draw upon these tools when we are faced with decisions of a moral nature. Since most of our decisions have a moral consequence we use our paradigms all of the time.

The “Rockin Roller Coaster” illustration:

* _____ is the fruit of the wrong paradigm!

What shapes our paradigms?

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

What are some factors that cause our paradigms to change?

-
-
-
-
-
-

For instance 1 Cor.10:31 reminds us of the need to make our God look great. The way we do that is by examining everything that we do even down to the most mundane of activities such as eating and drinking. To be honest, parenting is a mundane activity. There is nothing glamorous about parenting. So, we must begin the parenting process by examining all of our paradigms no matter how mundane they may be. In fact, I believe that the more commonplace the paradigm is the more important it becomes to scrutinize it. Parenting success and failure depends on how we handle the small stuff.

So, now that we know where paradigms come from and what it takes to change them it makes sense that we must learn for ourselves what true, lasting change looks like. All change follows a predictable pattern. Whether it be the parent or the child that is changing both will experience the four phases of change.

4 Phases of a Paradigm Shift

We learned last time that a variety of factors shape our paradigms. Family, friends, and personal tragedy can shape and shift a paradigm in our lives. Some of these changes take a lifetime, while others can happen in an instant. Regardless of how long a paradigm takes to shift, each shift has four things in common. It is important for us to recognize and understand these 4 phases if we ever hope to influence a paradigm swing in our lives.

- 1) _____, Pr 1:7, 22: without a basis of knowledge very little gets accomplished in our lives. There are two basic types of knowledge we deal with on a daily basis.

New: Romans 12:1-2:

Old: James 1:22:

- 2) _____, James 1:23-25, this phase answers the question, "What does it look like?" This is the "Aha!" moment in life where something clicks in our minds. The light bulb comes on! We understand for the first time how something impacts us or another person.
- 3) Applicability or _____, James 4:17: this phase is the action phase. You may discover a new truth about yourself or someone else and never take ownership of that fact. Sadly, many people never do the right thing for lack of courage or simple self-centeredness.
- 4) _____, we are habitual creatures. We thrive on routine and whenever possible we will strive to create a routine when none exists.

Remembering the “put-off” and “put-on” principle of Eph. 4:22-24. Let’s examine some parenting paradigms that need to be examined.

The Authoritative Parent Paradigm:

The Permissive Parent Paradigm:

The Lazy Parent Paradigm:

The Manipulative Parent Paradigm:

The Child-centered Parent Paradigm:

The Sheep Parent Paradigm:

All of the above listed paradigms can be replaced with a single Bible based model:

The Parent-centered Paradigm:

The Parent-centered model recognizes the husband and wife as the relationship in the home. Children therefore must be thought of as welcome members of the team.

The husband/wife relationship is the primary relationship within the home because God designed it to be a relationship of _____ (Matt. 19:6).

On the other hand, the parent child relationship is by its very nature _____ (Gen. 2:24). Children eventually grow and leave the home and begin their own permanent relationships when they leave and cleave to their spouse for life.

Tips for keeping the family Parent-centered:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Homework:

Together write out a list of your faulty parenting paradigms that must be examined. Identify the top three most urgent and together craft a plan to “put-off” and “put-on” the new Parent-centered paradigm. Be prepared to share your findings next time.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

Talk Time: (To be practiced five times this week ☺)

**** Key Concept: To those whom much has been given...much is required!***

Chapter Two

Becoming the Proactive Parent

Practice #2

The Practice of Learning to Elevate Virtues Above Feelings

Review:

The Three Pillars of Parenting are:

- 1) Elevating _____ above feelings.
- 2) Training our children to make their God look _____.
- 3) Train up children that will be a _____ to those around them.

As parents, every decision that we make is a decision to move toward or away from our parenting goals. Since every decision is moral in nature we must learn to identify what is at stake every time we choose. For instance, the choice to remain on the couch when our child's behavior requires us to act communicates a message about the importance of virtue or the lack thereof. Our choices either raise or lower the standard of virtue and you can be sure that our children won't miss a thing. As a parent, you are always training your children either proactively or reactively, either on purpose or by default. Let's identify together what is at stake in the moral decision making process.

Core Values and Virtues:

Standards of Virtue,

- *Honesty*
- *Integrity*
-

Note: As you teach these virtues to your children you must avoid lecturing. A simple five to ten word statement is the best way to impart these values to your children.

Example:

You catch junior in a lie.

You say:

- Lying is **dishonest**...you **must** always tell the **truth**!

Remember repetition is the key...don't feel as though you need to be creative here. Learn to use the same phrase for the same character deficiency.

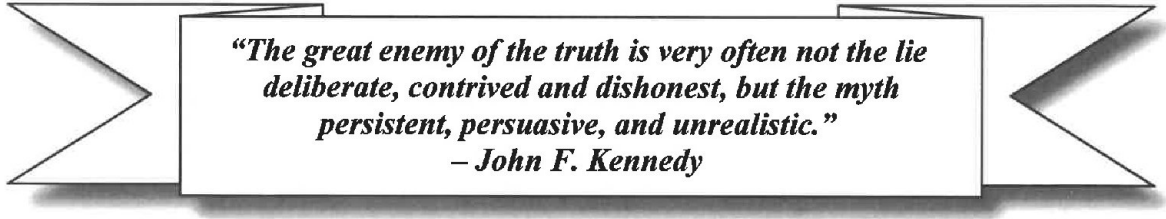
- I should not have to **remind** you...you **must** be **responsible**!
- You may not **speak with that tone** to your brother...you **must** be **kind**!
- You may not **tease** each other...you **must** **love** each other!
- You may not get **angry**...you **must** be a **good sport**!
- You may not **covet**...you **must** be **happy** for your sister!

Sneak Peek...

The two most important words in the vocabulary of the proactive parent are the words:

and,

The Motivation Model



*"The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie deliberate, contrived and dishonest, but the myth persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic."
– John F. Kennedy*

The Love of Virtue...or...The Fear of Punishment

- What are most people motivated by?
 1. A love of virtue or ...
 2. A fear of punishment?
- Why?

****Key concept:***

As a motivator, the _____ of punishment is only as effective as the individual's _____ of virtue!

- Short-range motivators:

- Long-range motivators:

What do you want to motivate your child's behavior?

Preferring Proactivity...Rejecting Reactivity

Our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions!

-Stephen Covey

Re-active Tree

Pro-active Tree

Highly proactive people do not blame circumstances, conditions, or conditioning for their behavior. Their behavior is a product of their own conscious choices, based on values, rather than a product of their conditions, based on feelings. –Stephen Covey

“Pro” means _____. The proactive parent decides to be proactive long before they are faced with a moral dilemma.

We Must Learn to Pre-activity...Our Pro-activity!

Putting it all together:

Two Snares:

Skipping Stones:

What virtues does the Talk Time model elevate?

-
-
-
-
-

Proverbs 27:23

Proverbs 27:12

Psalms 119:11

Proverbs 22:6

2 Tim 3:14

Homework:

Record 3 ways that you were proactive with your children this week:

1)

2)

3)

Record 3 ways that you were reactive with your children this week: (Identify in writing the proactive alternatives to each.)

1)

2)

3)

For those with children eight years old or older: each time your child elevates virtue above feeling this week ask them why they did it. (Look for their motivation...i.e. Love of Virtue or Fear of Punishment) Write down any insights you gain.

Observations:

Chapter Three

Building Moral Muscle

Practice #3

The Practice of Developing The Moral Memory

The Moral Memory

"Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Deuteronomy 6:4-9

God's word instructs us that the primary training ground for teaching other's to love God is the family. We are reminded in Deuteronomy 6:7 to be diligent in teaching our children to love God. Do it all of the time we are told...when you sit in your house...when you walk by the way...even when you lie down and rise up again. Parents ought to encourage their children to love God twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. How do we accomplish such an important task? What does it look like to train a child to love God? Simply stated, moms and dads must train their children to develop consistent, God honoring...Moral Memory!

Developing a Moral Muscle Memory

The moral muscle memory is very much like an athlete's muscle memory. The best athletes train their muscles to respond in a consistent and predictable manner every time the brain sends a command. The consistently accurate golf swing is developed after much repetition. Hour after hour, day after day the golfer swings the club over and over again until his brain and body are one. Tiger Woods is such an accomplished golfer

because he has practiced every day of his life since he was three years old. However, practice and repetition will not produce excellent results unless the athlete is coached properly and refines his technique. Imagine Tiger Woods practicing day after day without the help of a golfer who was older and wiser to coach him. With no one to offer advice and helpful instruction, ultimately, Tiger wouldn't be much better than the average golfer. Practice only makes perfect if what we are learning is consistently refined against a standard of perfection. The moral muscle memory, just like physical muscle memory, must be consistently refined against a standard of excellence. Moral excellence is precisely why God tells us to teach our children to obey His Word 24/7. Surprisingly, the family, not the church is the primary instrument God uses for training our moral muscle memories. Whereas the church must put spiritual meat on the table, the church cannot force anyone to eat it. Families have been given the unique privilege of being the best place to make moral muscle memories. The church can assist in the process but it cannot and should not be the only source for moral development. Naively, many parents lean on the church youth group or the Sunday-School program to teach that which they are unwilling to teach their own children at home. The end result is young adults with weak and unreliable moral muscle memory. When a moral dilemma presents itself to the child, it is the training of the parent, not the youth group leader that is needed. Moral muscle memory is trained, developed, and perfected at home through consistent parental reinforcement. So, what does a good moral muscle memory look like?

Training a Moral Muscle Memory

I want to clarify one thing at this point. Moral muscle training is not like making vacation memories. Moral muscle training is the consistent, diligent, practice of forming Godly character habits. Moral muscle training just like physical muscle training requires repetition, hard work, boatloads of time, and solid Bible study. Just like an athlete trains the body, so we are to train our moral conscience to respond predictably, precisely, and punctually every time a moral dilemma requires a decision. You may want to think of the moral memory as a sort of fail-safe decision mechanism. Our goal then becomes, whenever a decision of a moral nature is to be made, the moral conscience defaults to that which is Biblical, instead of that which is carnal, ultimately developing a long term love of virtue. However, this is not an easy process. Jeremiah 17:9 reminds us that our own hearts are deceitful and wicked...in fact, our own hearts will even deceive us. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 26:41 that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Yes indeed, we have a lot of work ahead of us if we are going to train our moral muscle memories properly. However, the job is not so overwhelming that we should not attempt the task.

Deut. 6:7, provides a winning strategy for the making of a great moral conscience...just plug away at it day and night. Virtually every moment of every day provides us with some sort of *moral training opportunity*. Moral muscle memory training takes place at the grocery store when junior begins to act up in the candy aisle. Faced with the moral dilemma of an unruly child...what will you do? Will you reward the demands of the child with candy in an attempt to befriend them or will you teach patience and long-suffering by denying the child? Moral muscle memory training takes

place either way! *Either you develop a memory that understands the benefits of patience or you develop a memory that understands the benefits of manipulation.*

Consider another example, what takes place at your home when the phone rings and it is a call you don't want to take? Do you tell your child to answer and tell the party at the other end that you are not home or do you take the call yourself? The former develops a moral muscle memory that understands the benefits of dishonesty, while the latter develops a moral muscle memory that understands the benefits of integrity and responsibility.

Proverbs 22:6 warns and encourages us at the same time:

“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Every time a moral training opportunity presents itself, we must take that moment to practice our swing. Over and over again we practice honesty and reject dishonesty. Over and over again we practice respect and reject disrespect. Over and over again the moral training goes... until the moral memory is so disciplined that it becomes second nature for us to elevate virtues above feelings.

MORAL ★ MART



“If you aim at nothing you will hit it every time.”
– Unknown

Each one of us is designed to be a moral agent. As a moral agent we possess certain unique and wonderful qualities. Each one has a body, spirit, and emotions. We are bombarded with information about the body (physical), and self esteem, (emotional), but we are told the (moral) person does not exist or is not important. As a result, we are drowning in a sea of self-absorption, buried with information, yet longing for wisdom.

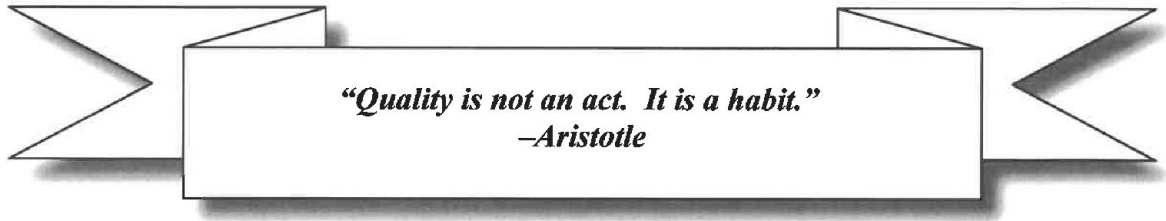
What is The MORAL ★ MART?

The MORAL-MART is that place where decisions are made. It is a type of moral warehouse. Several major decision making components are stored in the moral warehouse. Decisions are produced when:

- The mind (thinking), and
- The heart (feeling), consult
- The conscience (standards of morality) to determine a course of action.

I want you to picture your moral conscience as a giant Wal-Mart store. As you walk through the doors you expect to see a vast warehouse full of all sorts of merchandise on the shelves. Your moral conscience ought to be well stocked with all sorts of high quality virtues and values. Sadly, many of us have poor quality merchandise on the shelves. We have stocked our moral warehouses with inferior quality thinking based on faulty assumptions (paradigms) and feelings-driven reactivity.

The goal is to eliminate the poor quality stuff from the shelves and replace it with the high quality virtuous stuff. So, how do we do that? How do we live proactively and not reactively? How do we upgrade our paradigms? How do we restock our moral warehouse with the high quality virtue stuff instead of the poor quality “we” stuff? Well, let’s begin by looking at the “Decision Depot” model so that we may gain insight into the decision making process. Once we understand how and why decisions are made, then we can appreciate virtuous decision-making. We must also understand the various lenses through which we view the decision-making process. Decisions are made in only two directions after having been viewed through one of three lenses.



*"Quality is not an act. It is a habit."
—Aristotle*

Decision Depot Model

.....

How Thinkers, Feelers, and Doers Make Decisions

Thinkers are prone to _____ obedience.

Feelers are prone to _____ offerings.

Doers are prone to always have a _____ idea.

Putting it all together:

Scenario #1:

After the morning church service lets out, you are enjoying some fellowship in the lobby when you notice your child and a deacon's child running around the AWANA game circle.

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Scenario #2:

For your child to participate in the after school program, he must wear sneakers. You think the rule is silly and besides he wants to wear his cowboy boots.

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Scenario #3:

Your child is invited to an acquaintance's birthday party, he accepts. The day of the party he/she gets another invite from his/her best friend to go to a professional football game as their special guest.

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Scenario #4:

You are on your way out the door to church, when you discover that the chores you asked your child to do were never completed although he/she claimed they were all finished.

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Scenario #5:

The children's choir has been practicing for five weeks, but your child did not want to be involved. Now, on the day of the performance, they are insisting on going up front with the other children.

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Scenario #6:

You lay out your preschooler's clothes for the next day. He/she appears for breakfast wearing something completely different. When you ask them about the clothes you laid out, they politely tell you they want to wear something different.

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Scenario #7:

You set your child's dinner plate in front of them and they tell you they are not hungry for that dinner.

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Homework:

Identify your child's personality type...thinker, feeler, or doer.

Identify any changes you need to make in how you parent each child.

Pick 3 virtues that you intend to teach into this week with your children. Ensure that you include yourself in the training.

1)

2)

3)

Chapter Four

Rights? Or Responsibilities?

Whose responsibility is it anyway?

Virtue in Action: Respect...Humility...Leadership

In chapter one, we learned that the primary relationship in the home is the husband/wife relationship. All other relationships gain their stability or instability from the security or insecurity of that main bond. Since, the parent-centered model recognizes the husband and wife as the primary relationship in the home, children therefore, must be thought of as welcome members of the team.

To Review:

The husband/wife relationship is the primary relationship within the home because God designed it to be a relationship of _____ (Matt. 19:6).

On the other hand, the parent child relationship is by its very nature _____ (Gen. 2:24). Children eventually grow and leave the home and begin their own permanent relationships when they leave and cleave to their spouse for life.

Now we must unpack three specific roles: the role of the father, the role of the mother, and the role of the children. Although different, all three must function properly for the family to thrive as a God honoring unit. Let's examine each of these important roles.

The Role of the Father

Now it is time to get specific. If you are a man, what does God expect from you regarding your family? Perhaps you have never considered the idea that God has expectations for your family, but He does. God's expectations for us are different than our expectations for each other. Our expectations for each other are often selfish and inconsistent. God's expectations are never selfish and always consistent. In fact, God's expectations are called *standards*. Standards are goals that God spells out in His word to help us to live Godly, healthy, and happy lives. God's goals are best understood in light of our roles. God has specific roles for both men and women. This lesson explores the role of the man. Just like the human body, men, women, and children perform certain roles within the family.

Think about this for a minute; wouldn't it be strange and uncomfortable if your liver decided it was tired of its subservient role within the body and it decided, on its own, to act more like the heart or lungs? At first, the extra blood flow and lung capacity might seem beneficial but it wouldn't take long before the whole thing fell apart due to the build up of impurities in the body. I believe our marriages suffer because of the impurities that build up in them over time, impurities that are caused when we refuse to function within the manufacture's design and specifications.

To appreciate man's role in God's design, we must start at the beginning and expand our examination from there.

Please place the four essential elements listed below in a logical order of authority from the top down. Use 1 Cor. 11:3 as a guide.

Animal.....God.....Woman.....Man.....Jesus

Are there any consequences if we **do** rearrange God's order?

Let's look at Genesis 2:15-3:21-

Key verse: 2:15, To keep,

Key verse: 3:6, he ate,

Key verse: 3:20, Adam and Eve...,

God's order is very important! Satan is perpetually trying to upset God's design by getting men to abdicate their roles and responsibilities. With so many men willing to surrender their roles it is no coincidence that our families get upside down at times.

Good News..... *God is on your side!*

He wants your family to thrive and be filled with joy. All we really have to do is act our parts.

The father's first role is that of _____.

Adam should have protected Eve from the serpent's lies. God's word describes the woman as the _____ vessel (**1 Peter 3:7**).

- Protect From _____ Harm

- Protect From _____ Harm

- Protect From _____ Harm

The father's second role is that of _____.

1 Timothy 5:8,

- Provide Income
- Provide _____
- Provide _____
- Provide _____
- Provide _____
- Provide _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

The father's third role is that of _____.

Genesis 3:17,

Genesis 3:20,

The literary device used in the original language of verse 20 causes it to stick out like a sore thumb, thus drawing extra attention to itself as a significant event. By Genesis 3:20, God's original plan for the order of mankind (man as the initiator) is restored and it will not be undone. Unfortunately, sin will war against God's intent until Christ's return.

- Initiate Bible Study
- Initiate laughter
- Initiate _____
- Initiate _____
- Initiate _____
- Initiate _____
- Initiate _____
- Initiate _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

The father's final role is that of _____.

Ephesians 5:25,

- Love Your Wife
- Love Your God
- Love _____
- Love _____
- Love _____
- Love _____
- Love _____
- Love _____
- Love _____
- _____

Putting it all together:

Preparing for your second job:

Bolivious:

Physical protection...what does it look like?

Emotional protection...what does it look like?

Spiritual protection...what does it look like?

Dad has super powers:

Lead... and let him lead:

Dad is the builder of the family identity:

Homework:

- Write each of your children a love letter and put it in the mail this week.
- With your wife, discuss the ways you can best initiate, provide, protect, and love her, and the family...write down her answers. Create a proactive plan for implementing the changes.

Chapter Five

Rights? Or Responsibilities

Whose responsibility is it anyway?

Part 2...

The Role of the Mother

So far in our study, we have discovered God's unique and exciting design for the family. However, discovering God's design is not enough. We must live according to the Word of God or risk catastrophic failure.

Understanding the role of the father and the role of the mother in the family will free us to experience the fullness of God's design. God designed the family to be fun and challenging at the same time. As we will discover, the role of the mother is quite different than the role of the father. God designed women to multi-task better than men. Consequently, the role of the mother is much more diverse than the role of a father. Don't get discouraged ladies, God gave you the ability to juggle many plates at once. Let's look at what those plates are.

The role of the mother begins in Genesis Chapter Two in her role as a wife. In fact, the role of the mother is derived from the role of the wife. With this understanding, let's look at the woman's first role.

According to Genesis 2:18, the woman is to be a _____ helper to her husband.

You will never be a better mother than you are a wife!

Her next role is as the _____ of the home.

Stewards at Home:

Oikouros, Titus 2:5, a keeper at home, to look after domestic affairs with prudence and care.

Now, let's compare Titus 2:5 with 1 Timothy 5:14

Keep House:

Means to *Guide the house*. To be the head of, or to rule a family, to rule a household.

Titus 2:5 is talking about the work of the home as most people picture housework.

But

1 Timothy 5:14 is completely different. It refers to the woman running or ruling the home. The wife administers the affairs of the family at home. She must still submit to her husband's wishes but she has the responsibility to run the home.

A Huge Task!

As a good steward, she runs the daily affairs of the home so as to please the master of the home. Her role as the keeper of the house compliments her role as a suitable helper.

Mothers are Sensible:

Titus 2:5 (Discreet KJV), Sophron, meaning soundness of mind, self-controlled, prudent.

Sophron:

Comes from two root words:

Sozo, to save, preserve, or recover

Phren, heart, mind, thought, or thinking

She recognizes spiritual _____ in the children.

She is _____ to the spiritual and emotional climate in the home.

This word is also used in Titus 1:8, and in 1 Timothy 3:2 referring to the requirements of the overseer.

Q. How would this characteristic express itself in a woman's daily existence? In other words, what does sensible look like?

Titus 2:3-5

Titus 2:4 & 5 teaches us three valuable roles that the Godly mother fulfills in her family!

Mothers are Loving: Titus 2:4

Philandros (from Phileo) to _____. Denotes having something in common.

A type of brotherly love that holds someone dear.

Titus 2:4 is the only place in the NT. where this word is used!

Titus 2:4 is teaching us a very simple concept, *Husbands and wives are to be friends!* The family will suffer if mom and dad are not friends.

Q. Ladies, how many of you consider your husband your friend?

Q. How many of you consider your children to be your friends?

It is alarming to me to consider the number of couples that are not friends. They carp at each other and talk down (publicly) to the other person. Often, the disdain for the spouse is visible.

The depth of the husband / wife friendship, not the lack thereof, should characterize Christian families.

Q. What are you doing to build a friendship with your spouse and what are you doing to tear it down?

Mothers are Chaste: 1 Peter 3:2

Hagnos, free from ceremonial defilement. Holy, _____, (free from sin).

Women are to win over their husbands and nurture their families without sinning!...No manipulation... no replacing the father with the kids... no games.

The Role of the Children

*"Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; The fruit of the womb is a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth.
How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them..." Psalm 127:3-5*

"In order for our children to grow into whole and healthy people, we must help them build strong foundations to prepare them for the rest of their lives. Because everything is ultimately a spiritual and moral issue, the more intentional and clear minded we are regarding their spiritual development, the better off they will be for the duration of their lives."
-George Barna

Emily and John had just closed on their first home when the bad news arrived. Before they even moved into their property, they were made an offer to sell the house for three times its value. A local developer made a last minute change to a project that included the real estate now owned by John and Emily. Desperate to move forward, the developer made an offer they could not refuse. It seemed as though the couple's timing could not have been worse. They were hoping to move in...decorate...and enjoy a few years together before having to cash out on their home, yet as fate would have it they found themselves facing an unwanted and unplanned offer that would change their lives forever.

There were so many things to consider. If they cashed out they would have to pay taxes, commissions, and storage fees while they shopped for their next home. Soon they would have to invest the money...but which investment and for how long? The situation was almost more than they could bear, but John and Emily loved the Lord and found strength and guidance from the Bible, so they resigned themselves to make the best of the situation, secretly hoping that this windfall so early in their marriage didn't mean that they were going to be rich. They had seen others who had more money than sense and they were not about to become one of those ultra-rich couples that did nothing but manage their money. After all, they wanted more out of life than financial independence, even if it meant they had to prevent financial windfalls in the future. But, after consulting with friends and close relatives, they decided to make the most of the situation by selling the house and reinvesting the enormous profit.

At first, John and Emily were excited about the money. Their families were supportive and even enthusiastic for a while. As the years unfolded it seemed as though the financial windfalls would never end, six million dollars in the first five years of marriage. The friends and neighbors helped spend the money, but it was almost too much to keep up with. However, Emily was a real trouper, she organized the investments and found creative ways to manage the family's portfolios. "This money thing isn't as bad as I first imagined it," thought Emily, yet she was growing weary of the constant comments from her girlfriends with smaller portfolios. Her friends would quip that they couldn't handle the two million they had..."how in the world would they ever handle eight million." They all joked about getting John's mouse fixed so that he couldn't add to the family's misery any more. Emily laughed along with the others but secretly she wished the jokes would stop. She tried to imagine which investment they could live without. Sure, life would be simpler, but now it was obvious to her and John that this was the life that God called them too. Someone had to be abundantly blessed by God and they guessed it was them. John often made Emily laugh as they climbed into their 15 passenger Rolls-Royce, joking that some day they might buy each one of their smaller investments a sports car of their own. Emily never pictured herself in such luxury but she was beyond the initial dread of it all and was actually enjoying this season in life, if she could only keep her mind off of her extended relatives. The worst part of wealth was the reaction of the in-laws. Both sides of the family were verbally brutal. Initially, they were supportive and excited about the first three or four million, but Emily recalls the evening it all turned ugly. The call from the investment broker was late that month and Emily became anxious. She knew what a late call from the banker meant...two weeks late...profits! Sure enough the phone finally rang and it was Gabriel the stockbroker...John and Emily had hit it rich again..."AGAIN," cried out Emily dreading the unavoidable conflict with her mom that was to come. "My parents were only marginally O.K. with the last windfall...my mom will freak when I tell her we are expecting another big check." exclaimed Emily. She was right. The phone call did not go well. The tension between Emily and her parents was considerable. Grandma and Pop-pop loved the money, but enough was simply enough. How were those kids going to manage all of those millions? Who was going to look after all of that money if something were to happen to either of them and then there was the question of college tuition..."when are you two going to get some sense and stop while you are still ahead, after all, we couldn't bear it if you lost a million...you need to think about those things before you go off making billions." mumbled Pop. Emily's dad liked to say "billions"

instead of millions just to get a rise out of Emily. “So what if God wants to give us billions of dollars...I’d be glad if He did.” Emily retorted, all the time wanting to just break down and cry. But, she held it together on the phone long enough to press the end button before her grief overwhelmed her. As she sat and cried, she dreamed about that first home and the unexpected profit. She wondered if they had done the right thing in selling the house. Perhaps she and John should have been more careful and chosen a house that would not have appreciated so quickly or perhaps they should have looked for a house that would have even lost its value but hindsight now was pointless. It seemed as though everybody’s quality of life had improved. John was generous with his money. The in-laws had new homes, fancy cars, and expensive vacations yet they were more angry and toxic than ever. John and Emily’s friends began to dwindle until they only had real contact with other wealthy families. They were left with more questions than answers.

Where did it all go wrong?
Why was there so much bitterness and anxiety?
What was missing?

Children!

What is the role of children in the family?

Some claim that children are a blessing from God, while some claim that they are anything but a blessing. Some want a lot of kids, while others go to radical measures to limit their family size. Why are so many Christian families so confused about God’s expectation for them? I believe that we have a profound misunderstanding about the role of children in the family. God on the other hand has a lot to say about His children in our families. Before we look into His Word, let’s create a working definition for children and their place in the family.

Children are welcome members in the family not the center of the family.
They should be characterized by:

Obedience, Responsibility, Respect, Honor, and Teamwork.

Our expectations for our children will not differ much from our expectations for houseguests. If our kids think of themselves as beloved houseguests they will learn how to please God and Mom and Dad in their role as children.

- **Obedience and Responsibility:**

- Eph. 6:1
- Pr. 8:23
- Pr. 19:26
- Col. 3:20

Note: Good houseguests are careful to learn the rules of the home so as to please the host. They enter each room with respect and care, *circumspectly*, never interrupting a conversation or drawing attention to themselves. They value each item in the home with the value the owner places on it not what they think it is worth to them. Further, each houseguest is eager to obey and respect the way things are done by their host...they never question, complain, or criticize, for they are grateful guests. When they do ask questions, their intent is to learn, grow, and gain respect for that which they have yet to master.

- **Respect and Honor:**

- Eph. 6:2-3 (Parents)
- Pr. 13:1 (Discipline)
- Pr. 7:1-2 (Instruction)
- Pr. 5:1 (Wisdom)

Note: A good houseguest brings honor to the host. Others think highly of the host because of the generous words of the guest.

- **Teamwork:**

- Deut. 6:4-9
- Pr. 31...(“Household” is mentioned four times in this text...clearly the Pr. 31 home was characterized by teamwork.)

Note: Integration not independence is the goal of the good houseguest. As a welcome member to the family they are always careful to be part of the team and participate. They are cautious not to become too independent. They earn the right to be heard by demonstrating consistently responsible, respectful, and honorable behavior in the home.

Godly children bring seven blessings to the family:

1. Optimism (Gen. 4:1, Pr. 19:18)
2. Enthusiasm (Gen 21:1-7)
3. Ambassadorship (Deut. 6:4-9)
4. Fruit (Psalm 127:3-5)
5. Fun (Pr. 10:1)
6. Blessings (Num. 5:28, Deut. 28:4,11)
7. Focus (Gen.9:7, Deut. 6:3, Lk. 1:24-25)

What blessings are your children bringing to your home?

Putting it all together:

Hospitality:

Cleanliness:

Organization:

Patience position:

Self-control practice:

Dominion:

“Why”

What are they characterized by?

Homework:

- Ladies, ask your husbands for areas in your marriage, parenting, or homemaking where he would like to see changes. Write his answers down. Create a proactive plan for implementing the changes.
- Work together to make a list of role specifications:

i.e. Suitable Helper:

- 1) Speak without a critical tone
- 2) Ask him instead of tell him
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

Chapter Six

Appropriateness

Practice #4

The Practice of Training

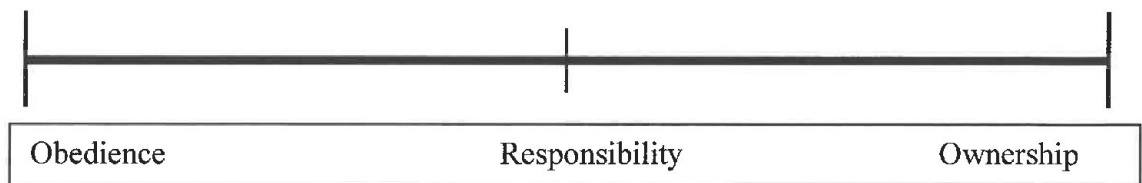
Remembering There's "A Person" Behind It!

**Key Concept:*
Interdependence

Virtue in Action: Responsibility...Compassion...Justice

As our children mature the quality and quantity of material in their moral warehouse increases, or at least it should. Whether or not to be proactive in stocking their moral conscience is your daily decision. It will take work to do it right. You must get up off of the couch of life and take advantage of each and every **moral training opportunity** your children hand you. If you find yourself frustrated or uncomfortable with their progress then you must learn to ask the hard questions in life. Stocking their shelves is work, but it's not as difficult as you might think. Begin by asking yourself where are they on the growth continuum? Have they taken ownership of the changes they need to make? If not, what is keeping them from changing? Let's examine together the growth continuum.

The Growth Continuum



_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------

Are you parenting to produce fruit or are you parenting outside of the trunk?

The Training Tree

Planted in _____.

Budding Responsibilities: (in home) _____ focused.

1. Hygiene (teeth, hair, clean clothes, shower or bath)
2. Bedroom (make bed, hang up clothes)
3. Personal (put away toys and books)
4. Mr. and Mrs.
5. Please and Thank you
6. Ready obedience

Primary Responsibilities: (in home) _____ focused.

1. Laundry
2. Kitchen chores and cooking duties
3. Mowing lawn
4. Babysitting at home for siblings (no pay)
5. Doing chores without being asked
6. Taking the initiative in all areas at home

**Note: All of these responsibilities are related to the family at large and can only be considered successful when the child consistently performs the task without parental reminder.*

Secondary Responsibilities: (outside of home) _____ focused.

**Note: Your child will want to skip the budding and primary responsibility phase to get to these responsibilities...the success of Secondary Responsibility depends upon the consistency of the budding and primary responsibilities. Resist the urge to skip to this level without the others.*

1. Babysitting others
2. Holding a job for pay
3. Teaching at Church
4. Serving as a volunteer in the community
5. Anything that involves praise or reward outside of the family.

Putting it all together:

- Ready Obedience...Quickly and Completely without Question or Complaint.
- Verbal freedoms
- Physical freedoms
- Moral freedoms
- Inappropriate responsibilities
- Mercy
- Transitional Parenting...moving from authority to trainer to coach, to friend/mentor
- Burnt offering...charming kids...OK vs. Yes Mommy, I'm coming.
- Mealtime etiquette (Primary)
- Visiting the homes of others (Secondary)

Chapter Seven

Loving Children Through Discipline

Practice #5

The Practice of Correction Through Encouragement

Often, our children present us with moral training opportunities that require direct intervention. In other words, their behavior requires parental correction. Essentially, your child's behavior will fall into one of two categories and it is your job to determine which type it is. The Bible reminds us that a child's bad behavior is either *foolish* or *childish*, there are no other choices. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Cor. 13:11:

"When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things."

Paul describes childishness to us here as something that will eventually be outgrown. It is in fact, something to be "done away with" as he describes it at the end of the verse. Childish behavior is distinctly different from foolish behavior. Notice, what Paul did not say... he did not say...

"When I was a child, I used to speak as a fool, think as a fool, reason as a fool; when I became a man, I did away with foolish things."

Note: You don't "outgrow" foolishness

Although, children are often foolish, as their parents, we must learn to distinguish between childish and foolish behavior and correct accordingly. Paul is teaching us that childishness is temporary but foolishness, if allowed to take root, will become permanent. In other words, childishness is only skin deep but foolishness goes all the way to the bone. Proverbs 22:15 gives us clear instruction regarding the foolishness of children;

"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him."

Discipline through encouragement seeks to correct childish behavior. Next time,

we will discuss what to do with foolish behavior but first things first. So, Mom's and Dad's how do we distinguish childish behavior from foolish behavior?

Simply stated, childish behavior becomes foolish behavior when prior instruction has been clearly and unambiguously given to the child by the parent or appropriate authority. For example, little Johnny spills his milk at the dinner table after placing it too close to the edge of the table. Johnny's mom and dad never instructed him to move the cup to a more secure location. Is this behavior childish or foolish? Clearly,

_____ Now, let's change the example just slightly...Johnny's mom instructs little Johnny about the proper placement of his milk cup and just prior to the meal being served she reminds him to move his cup away from the edge of the table. Johnny disregards his mother's clear and unambiguous instruction and he spills the milk again. Is this childish or foolish behavior?...can you describe the difference? Foolish behavior requires an entirely different reaction than childish behavior. Yet, the first and most important task for the proactive parent is to diligently determine the difference between foolishness and childishness. Calling foolishness childishness and vice versa will frustrate you and your child and will cause your child to become angry.

Simply stated, childish behavior becomes foolish behavior when prior instruction has been clearly and unambiguously given to the child by the parent or appropriate authority.

Caution: those of you who are strong in the mercy and compassion areas be careful not to call everything childishness and those of you who are strong in the authoritative, task oriented areas be careful not to call every behavior foolish.

- **Mercy must never be asked for, it is extended...granted...not begged for!*

The two most important words in the vocabulary of the proactive parent are the words:

and,

Clear and unambiguous instruction uses direct language that leaves no doubt in the mind of the receiver as to what is expected of them. The proactive parent never ends an instruction with the expression...OK? If you ask a question expect your child to answer a question. If you mean to direct their behavior without hesitation then you must not ask them a question.

Determine if the following are clear and unambiguous or not:

- Isn't it past time for you kids to be in bed.
- Don't you know what your bed time is.
- Go upstairs, brush your teeth and get into bed, now.
- You need to start wrapping up that game.
- You have five minutes until dinner... now finish your game.
- Stop dawdling, you take too long to eat.
- Pick up your fork and eat two green beans, now.
- You must obey Mommy, now.
- Why don't you obey me when I tell you to pick up your toys.

Correction with encouragement will help correct childish behavior. One of the best tools to correct childish behavior is to discover and practice your child's love language. Often, children act in a childish manner as a means to gain our attention. If a child is not feeling loved they may act out in strange (childish to us) ways that make no sense. If a child senses tension between mom and dad they may act out in childish ways. Such as:

- Getting out of bed to check on mom and dad asleep
- Infrequent bed wetting
- Spilling food or drink at the table
- Whining etc...

Understanding the love languages will transform your marriage, transform your parenting, transform your family and infuse courage into those whom you love. Childish behavior will diminish as we seek to discipline through encouragement. The word encourage tells us a story. To encourage means quite literally to infuse...that is to inject one with courage. Once filled with courage our children begin to model 1 Cor. 13:11 as they lay aside childish speak, thought, and behavior. Let's examine a primary tool that will help us deliver correction through encouragement. What is a love language? Let's learn together.

Putting it all together:

- **Pre-activity:**
 - Proactive alternative
 - Reactive alternative
- **Reflective time-out**
 - Proactive alternative
 - Reactive alternative
- **Catching them being good**
 - Proactive alternative
 - Reactive alternative
- **Environmental factors**
 - Proactive alternative
 - Reactive alternative
- **Training in times of non-conflict**
 - Proactive alternative
 - Reactive alternative

- **Childishness vs foolishness scenarios.**

1) The threatening repeating parent....scenario:

Jr. is seated on the floor underneath the table at Applebee's when dad finally notices he barks out "get on your seat and stay seated"...Jr. does not flinch. He repeats his request this time with a sharper voice. Jr. moves but only touches the seat in a half standing/half leaning position. Mom and dad look at each other with frustration in their eyes as Mom threatens the child by saying; "if you don't sit on that seat right now I will take all of the toys out of your room for a week." The child whines in a very loud voice showing her disgust for the latest turn of events. Mom again repeats the threat but this time adds the phrase "and I mean it" The child moves to a standing position but this time on the seat which apparently satisfies our young couple....to celebrate their achievement they order dessert for her and themselves. (*Teachers note: I'm guessing the toys never left her bedroom either.*) How would you label this behavior? What would you have done in this situation?

2) Childish or Foolish?

Your six year old runs through the house and on her way past the living room knocks over her little sister who begins to cry. How would you label this behavior? What would you do in this situation?

3) Childish or Foolish?

As your six year old runs through the house you stop her and instruct her "no running in the house" as you turn back to the kitchen she runs around the corner and knocks down her little sister who begins to cry. How would you label this behavior? What would you do in this situation?

4)

Your eighteen month old knock over his glass of milk for the third time this meal. How would you label this behavior? What would you do in this situation?

5)

Your twelve year old knocks over his glass of milk for the third time this meal. How would you label this behavior? What would you do in this situation?

Chapter Eight

Discipline Through Chastisement

The practice of correction pt. 2

Scriptures:

- Proverbs 13:24
- Proverbs 22:15
- Proverbs 23:13-14
- Proverbs 29:15

As you have discovered in these many lessons together the road to training our children involves considerably more than just a casual approach. There are many things to consider as we raise our children. Have you established paradigms that elevate virtues above feelings. Have you stocked their moral conscience with high quality values. Have you helped them develop a love of virtue and not just a fear of punishment. Are you parenting to produce fruit or are you parenting outside of the trunk? Is our instruction clear and unambiguous? Are you properly distinguishing between childish and foolish behavior? If you can answer yes to all of the above questions then you will certainly raise children with well-developed moral muscle. You will enjoy being around your own kids and others will enjoy their company also.

Developing good parenting practices is much like developing a good golf swing. At first, it seems like you will never learn how to do it right. There are many frustrating moments but eventually with practice and good coaching your swing begins to improve. As your game improves you begin to enjoy it more and more. Parenting is no different. Many of us have lost interest in having more children because parenting is just no fun. I'm here to reassure you that the fun part of parenting can be recaptured if you practice the nine habits of the proactive parent. Now,

with all of that in mind it is time to explain the chastisement side of correction.

Biblical chastisement is different than cultural spanking. Cultural spanking is often done as a last resort when all else fails. Many times cultural spanking is done in anger and out of a desire to punish the child and not in an attitude of restoration or moral training. Remembering that *frustration is the fruit of the wrong paradigm* is important because cultural spanking is frequently administered in frustration. Parents must never spank their children in anger or frustration and never with a desire to punish. Rather, parents must learn to correct foolish behavior with balanced chastisement. So, what does a balanced approach to chastisement look like? First, it must be thought of as one of the many tools a parent has in his or her tool chest. If the only tool you use is chastisement then you are using a one-size-fits all approach to parenting and you can expect your child to build resentment toward you. On the other hand, if you never use chastisement then you will develop a foolish child that will eventually grow to believe that the world revolves around them. Such a child will have a poorly developed moral conscience and he will be more likely to elevate feelings above virtues. You can expect such a child to become angry, hostile, critical, cynical, pessimistic, and a finger pointing blame assessor...get the picture? So, let's not do that.

Chastisement is the most logical response to foolish behavior. Remember, if clear and unambiguous instruction has been given to a child by his parents or an appropriate authority then his bad behavior must be considered foolish and not childish. Once we establish the behavior as foolish we can determine the appropriate form of chastisement. The following flow chart will help guide you through the decision making process. Once you have determined that the behavior is foolish in nature you must next determine if a natural consequence has already been dispensed. For example:

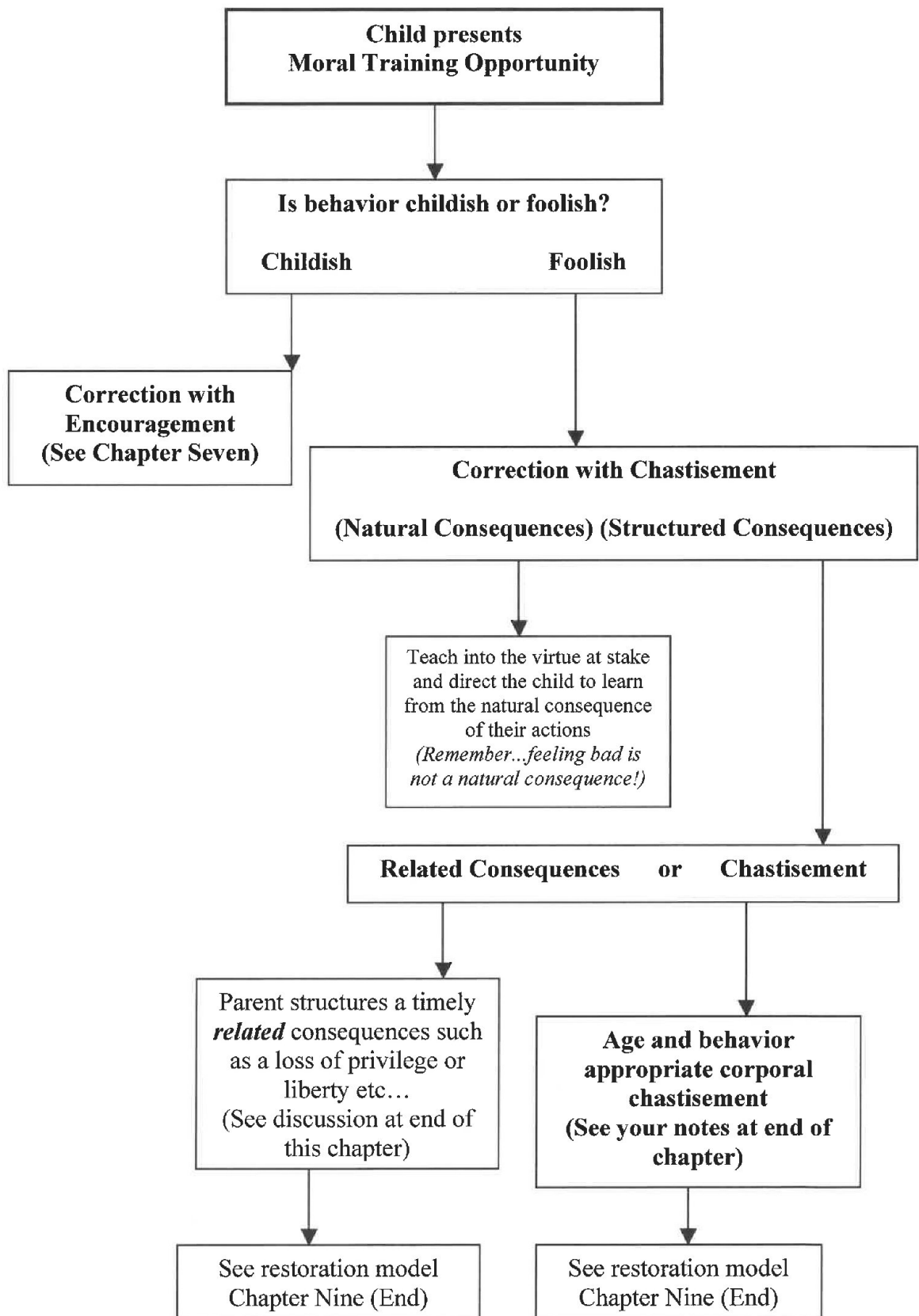
If you instruct Jr. to wear his shoes outdoors before he goes bike riding and he neglects to do so and falls from the bike scraping his feet this should be considered a *natural consequence* and no chastisement (spanking) would be administered.

However, if you go out side to check on the kids and notice Jr. riding the bike with no shoes it would be necessary to instruct the child to come

into the house and submit to the appropriate chastisement (spanking).

The prime age for chastisement is between ages 2 and 6. Spanking a child over the age of 6 should begin to diminish as they get older. Older children will respond better to a loss of privilege or a *related consequence* (more on related consequences later).

Chastisement Flow Chart



Related Consequences

As children move beyond the spanking age of six the times that spankings are appropriate will decline in frequency. Often spanking at this age is less effective than a loss of privilege or a related consequence.

What is a related consequence? A related consequence is exactly what the name implies...it is a meaningful loss of a freedom.... privilege... social engagement or fun activity

DIRECTLY related to the child's foolish behavior. Example:

Behavior:

Jr. rides the bike without shoes after Mom gave clear and unambiguous instruction not to do so.

Related Consequence:

- Jr. loses the use of the bike for one week
- Jr. must clean all of his shoes and organize them in his closet

Unrelated Consequences:

- Jr. loses his computer privilege for a month
- Jr. gets a stern lecture about the importance of healthy feet and Osteo-injuries
- Jr. gets his bed time moved up one half hour...etc...

The most common mistakes parents make when chastising their children is to: 1) Threaten a completely unrelated consequence and 2) Never following through 3) Half-hearted spanking.

The most common mistakes parents make when chastising their children is to:

1) Threaten a completely unrelated consequence and

2) Never follow through.

3) Not administer a thorough spanking

Putting it all together:

Age Appropriate Structured Consequences:

Age Appropriate Related Consequences:

Chapter Nine

The Renewal Model

Practices 6, 7, & 8...

The practices of repentance, forgiveness and restoration.

The Restoration Model

As we help our children form a well-stocked moral conscience it will be necessary to teach them how to set right those things that they have blown. The younger we teach our children to extend and receive forgiveness the better it will be for them and the people close to them. The restoration model is designed to walk them and us through the renewal process.

One thing is clear, most men and women are lousy at extending and receiving forgiveness. Timing and wording are important when it comes to restoration. Forgiveness is different than apology. How so?

Apologizing is a statement of _____ that is obvious to all. Saying “I’m sorry” expresses how you _____ about the situation but does nothing to address or correct the offense. Remember we must subordinate feelings to virtues at every opportunity.

Forgiveness on the other hand should be accompanied by an _____ and must include an _____ of wrong doing and a request for forgiveness to the offended party. This allows the offended party to discard the matter all together. Apology alone does not allow the offended party to throw out the offense. No wonder past wrongs linger for so long even after an apology!

1) Knowledge

2) Discovery

3) Ownership

4) Practice

When asking for forgiveness never attach “Ya, but” to the end of the statement. You must never qualify it in any way. If you were wrong, you were wrong... Teach your children to seek forgiveness in a timely manner. You should model this behavior for them. Dad, when was the last time your kids heard you ask for forgiveness for a harsh word or angry outburst? Have they ever seen you ask Mom for forgiveness? Proactive parents model excellence in front of the kids. ***Remember the re-active person is the one who continually blames others for his problems.***

Apology alone is incomplete without asking for forgiveness. In fact, all four steps of the process need to be practiced:



The Restoration Model Statement

A simple statement works best:

“I am sorry , will you please forgive me for _____ (character flaw). I was wrong!”

Try this tonight!

Expressing forgiveness properly is the first and most important step in healing an ailing relationship.

If we learn to ask for forgiveness when necessary and we understand the importance of the unconditional surrender we will see *all* of our relationships heal and thrive as a result. Don’t be afraid to ask your kids to forgive you...you will be surprised at how quick they are to forgive and restore.

Asking forgiveness is the right thing to do, it costs us nothing, and the proactive parent knows it!

Putting it all together:

Chapter Ten

Proactive Parenting in Daily Life

Practice #9

The practice of practice

What does it look like?

- Equipping ‘Here Am I’ believers...Isa. 6-6-8

Love Languages

If you have ever traveled to a foreign country where you did not know the language it was at best a memorable experience and for most of us a downright frightening encounter. You were certain that trouble lurked behind each corner. Each stranger could mean you harm. There was a sense of isolation and adventure. Marriage is not unlike a trip to foreign soil. It is beautiful to look at in a magazine but once you arrive reality sets in. If you don't speak the same language as the person you are married to the experience can be scary and frustrating. Fortunately for you, there is help. Consider this next lesson to be a sort of Berlitz course in the language of love.

Quite often in our marriages we attempt to demonstrate love only to have it end up in a heap on the floor. Why is that? We have great intentions; yet fall short of the mark.

Well, for most of us we don't speak the same language, love language that is! Our marriage is a lot like being trapped in a land where nobody understands you and you are understood by none. Let me explain:

There are Five Love Languages

You may possess any of the following love languages. One of these is your primary language, while the others may be strong but not supreme. Each one of us likes to receive love in the same way we like to display love. The problem arises when our spouse has a different love language. You try and try to show love, yet it never seems to be appreciated. Well, that's because you don't speak the same love language! Once you discover your own language then look for the one that best describes your spouse.

Acts of Service

This individual likes to do things for other people. This person is a natural servant. This person tends to be neat and well organized. You won't find burnt out lights in this house, nor will you find a great deal of affection. Organization and structure are a characteristic of a servant. Typically, the person with this love language will come through the door after work or shopping with arms full. Each item will be put neatly away before anyone is greeted. Going to the garage to fetch a simple item can turn into a long chore as the servant has an eye for things that need to be done. If a light bulb is burned out he/she will stop to fix it and while they are there they might as well take out the garbage and tidy up the slipcovers on the van seats. Get the picture? Each and every chore accomplished is an act of love by doing things for others.

Quality Time

This person likes to spend time together over coffee or tea discussing interpersonal relationships. It is not enough to just be together, the quality time individual wants to know if you are as interested in them as they are in you. The time spent together must be of high quality. You must share each other's undivided attention. Quality time is spent on the couch or at dinner in a nice restaurant always in stimulating conversations. Quality time is not sitting together on the couch watching a football game (usually). It

may be spent watching a movie as long as the time is uninterrupted by children or tasks. A quality time person wants to know they are special and desired.

Words of Encouragement

This individual loves to give encouraging cards or letters. They will rarely miss a birthday or a special occasion where some encouraging note can be sent. They are always looking for ways to praise others. They often think they do not measure up to others. Their countenance lights up when praised. They may display around the house any valuable notes or cards they have received from others. They seek those who need encouragement when the rest of us are clueless.

Gift Giving

The gift giver really lives to buy and distribute gifts to anyone they have a relationship with. This is different than the encourager who only gives verbal or written gifts. The language of gift giving will usually seek to give a useful gift to someone for no special reason. Gift giving at the holidays and special occasions is mandatory. However, the true gift giver will give regardless of an occasion or not. They love receiving thoughtful gifts. It lets them know they are loved. The gift giver would rather spend money on a gift than put it in the bank. We all like to give and receive gifts but the gift giver goes up and above the norm in this area.

Physical Touch and Closeness

This love language is fairly obvious. This individual loves to hug and hold hands. They will touch strangers. They love to put a hand on your knee while you are talking. They may not even realize they are doing it. This is not a sexual type of touch, rather it is more of a continual reassurance touching. The husband who loves to hug in the kitchen during meal preparations is a typical example. These people love back rubs and foot rubs, etc...

The closeness part of the language is similar to quality time yet there is a subtle difference. Closeness means just being together. A wife may ask her husband to sit in the same room with her while they both read separate books. No conversation is required unlike quality time. The child who always wants to be near by or in the same room with adults just listening to them fits the closeness language. Servants find all the hugging and time spent doing nothing together annoying. Affection and touch are very important to this love language.

Now that we have described these various love languages you are probably drawing a picture in your mind of which is your love language and which is your future or present spouse's. One love language will be primary, although you may have another that is very strong and it is usually easy to pick the one that is most definitely not you. For instance, if you love hugs and kisses and back rubs and wish you could get more of them, then your language is most likely that of physical touch and closeness. If you love to do things for people or you find yourself the person who continually takes on tasks that others don't volunteer to do, then your language is probably acts of service. If you just wish people would stop invading your personal space and you could go for the rest of

your life without the obligatory hugging and kissing that goes on when the neighbors come through the door for dinner, then your language is not physical touch. If you receive gifts and think how to get rid of it rather than how to display it your language is most definitely not gift giving. And so it goes.

Now, I want to remind you to do a very important exercise. Take some time and write out your love languages in order from strongest to weakest. A space is provided below for this exercise. After you have identified yours, identify those of your future/present spouse. Also, write those out below. "Once you have identified your language and that of your spouse you will gain a new appreciation for that person and possess an invaluable insight into them. You are now armed with the ability to love them in a language they understand and to identify love overtures from them that miss your languages, yet are significant to them on your behalf. **If you can learn to speak the other person's language it will set your relationships free!** Invest some time now in writing out then discussing with your future/present spouse your language and theirs. Examine how close your lists match. Discuss how you can better display love in a way that is significant to the other person. When the Lord commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves, I believe this is exactly what He had in mind. Enjoy!

Touchpoints of Love

Designed by Gary and Joy Hanson

Do you know each family member's love language? Here is an exercise that we want you and your kids to try. Within each group, rate the sentence 1-5 according to what would make you feel most appreciated and loved by your spouse, children, or parents. The number 5 represents what you most appreciate; number 1, in contrast, is what you least appreciate, in each group (no individual grouping may have a number repeated twice). Please note that some questions distinguish between male and female. Answer those appropriately, according to your gender and position in the family.

Group One

- A____ Your spouse/child says, "You really did a great job on that. I appreciate it."
- B____ Your spouse/child unexpectedly does something in or around the house or your room that you appreciate.
- C____ Your spouse/child brings you home a surprise treat from the store.
- D____ Your spouse/child invites you to go on a leisurely walk just to chat.
- E____ Your spouse/child makes a point to embrace and kiss you before leaving the house.

Group Two

- A____ Your spouse/child tells you how much he or she appreciates you.
- B____ Your spouse/child (male) volunteers to do the dishes and encourages you to relax. Your spouse/child (female) volunteers to wash your car and encourages you to relax.

C____ Your spouse/child (male) brings you flowers, just because he cares.
Your spouse/child (female) brings you home a special food treat from the
local bakery.

D____ Your spouse/child invites you to sit down and talk about your day.

E____ Your spouse/child gives you a hug when your just passing by room
to room.

Group Three

A____ Your spouse/child during a party shares about a recent success you
had.

B____ Your spouse/child cleans out your car.

C____ Your spouse/child surprises you with an unexpected gift.

D____ You spouse/child surprises you with a special afternoon trip.

E____ Your spouse holds your hand as you walk through the mall or your
child/parent stands by your side with an arm around your shoulder at a
public event.

Group Four

A____ Your spouse/child praises you about one of your special qualities.

B____ Your spouse/child brings you breakfast in bed.

C____ Your spouse/child surprises you with a membership to something
you've always wanted.

D____ Your spouse/child plans a special night out for the two of you.

E____ Your spouse/child will personally drive you to an event instead of
having to go on the old, crowded bus with the team.

Group Five

A_____ Your spouse/child tells you how much his or her friends appreciate you.

B_____ Your spouse/child takes time to fill out the long complicated applications that you had hoped to get to this evening.

C_____ Your spouse/child sends you something special through the mail.

D_____ Your spouse/child kidnaps you for lunch and takes you to your favorite restaurant.

E_____ Your spouse/child gives you a massage.

Go on to the score sheet on the next page.

Transfer your scores from your test questions to this scoring profile.

	Encouraging Words	Acts of Service	Gift-Giving	Quality Time	Touch
Group 1	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 2	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 3	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 4	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 5	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Totals	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____

Touchpoints of Love for Your Children

Designed by Gary and Joy Hanson

Do you know each family member's love language? Here is an exercise that we want you and your kids to try. Within each group, rate the sentence 1-5 according to what would make you feel most appreciated and loved by your spouse, children, or parents. The number 5 represents what you most appreciate; number 1, in contrast, is what you least appreciate, in each group (no individual grouping may have a number repeated twice).

Group One

A____ Mom or Dad says, "You really did a great job on that. I appreciate it."

B____ Mom or Dad unexpectedly does something in or around the house or your room that you appreciate.

C____ Mom or Dad brings you home a surprise treat from the store.

D____ Mom or Dad invites you to go on a leisurely walk just to chat.

E____ Mom or Dad makes a point to embrace and kiss you before leaving the house.

Group Two

A____ Mom or Dad tells you how much he or she appreciates you.

B____ Mom or Dad volunteers to type your homework so you won't have to.

C____ Mom or Dad brings you home a special food treat from the local bakery.

D____ Mom or Dad invites you to sit down and talk about your day.

E____ Mom or Dad gives you a hug when your just passing by room to room.

Group Three

A____ Mom or Dad during a party shares about the great grades you got in school.

B____ Mom or Dad helps pick up your room.

C____ Mom or Dad surprises you with a present you didn't know you were going to get.

D____ Mom or Dad surprises you with a special afternoon trip.

E____ Mom or Dad holds your hand as you walk through the mall or your stands by your side with an arm around your shoulder at a public event.

Group Four

A____ Mom or Dad praises you about one of your special abilities.

B____ Mom or Dad brings you breakfast in bed.

C____ Mom or Dad surprises you with a book you've always wanted.

D____ Mom or Dad plans a special night out for the two of you.

E____ Mom or Dad will personally drive you to an event instead of having to go on the old, crowded bus with the team.

Group Five

A____ Mom or Dad tells you how much his or her friends appreciate you.

B____ Mom or Dad takes time to fill out the long forms for school that you thought you were going to have to fill out yourself.

C____ Mom or Dad sends you something special through the mail.

D____ Mom or Dad kidnaps you for lunch and takes you to your favorite restaurant.

E____ Mom or Dad gives you a back rub.

Go on to the score sheet on the next page

Transfer your scores from your test questions to this scoring profile.

	Encouraging Words	Acts of Service	Gift-Giving	Quality Time	Touch
Group 1	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 2	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 3	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 4	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 5	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Totals	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____

Compare your score with your spouse/child/parent.
Write down from the primary to the least of love languages
of each family member.

Yours:

Your Spouse's:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Child

Child

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Child

Child

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Child

Child

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Tools

Dialogue Questions

The dialogue question is a great communication tool. The dialogue question allows you to communicate effectively while avoiding defensiveness. Just think of the game show...Jeopardy. Each statement by the contestants must be phrased in the form of a question. What, where, when, who, how precede each statement. Instead of saying, "Slow down, you are going to miss your turn." A dialogue question would go like this, "Is this where you wanted to turn?" or "Didn't you want to turn here?"

The charm of the dialogue question is that it eliminates defensiveness by eliminating blunt accusation. We become defensive when others assign a motive to our intentions. We feel judged when someone accuses us and we usually react defensively. To avoid such a reaction simply phrase what you would like to communicate in the form of a question. This allows the other person to make the desired discovery on their own and it further allows them to take ownership. Work dialogue questions into your vocabulary and watch the defensiveness in your life melt away.

Typical dialogue questions:

- Are you satisfied with how this job turned out?
- What is the speed limit on this stretch of road?
- Do you have the freedom to go outside and play right now?
- I had planned to make dinner, would you rather I sit and talk with you first?
- Can I help you with that or would you rather do it alone?
- Are you going to save some energy for me ...later?!

Loving Your Family Guidelines

The loving your family guidelines is a creative and proactive way to teach your family what love looks like. Each day of the week is dedicated to a different characteristic of love such as giving and serving etc.. Use this tool to model love to each member of the family. Create activities around the days characteristic so as to demonstrate in a real way what love looks like.

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.
(1 John 4:7)

Monday is **Give Day**

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son...
(John 3:16)

Tuesday is **Serve Day**

...by love serve one another. (Gal. 5:13)

Wednesday is **Edify Day**

...charity (love) edifies. (1 Cor. 8:1)

Thursday is **Prefer Day**

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another... (Romans 12:10)

Friday is **Ministry Day**

For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. (Heb. 6:10)

Talk Time

Talk time must become an important part of each day for the married couple.

Talk time takes place around the time the couple reunites at the end of the work day. When the husband comes home the couple gives each other 15 minutes of undisturbed talk time. On the couch, at the dinner table, or any place that the couple can remain undisturbed each gets caught up on the other's day. Children are not invited to talk time and any time spent with them comes after the talk time between Mom and Dad. Talk time produces wonderful results. Mom and Dad stay connected and the kids feel more secure because they observe Mom and Dad investing in their relationship in a real and tangible way. Make talk time an irreplaceable part of your daily routine.

THE FAMILY CONFERENCE TABLE

CONCEPT:

A solution focused communication exercise based on the 4 Laws of Communication (Eph. 4:15-32) utilizing teamwork and personal accountability to help families develop Christ-like communication skills.

TOOLS:

4 Laws on poster Board
Prayer for self and others
Signal for infractions (“time out”, etc)
Repentance, confession, forgiveness for failures
Journal of solutions reached, progress observed

FORMAT:

Anyone may request a conference table
Dad leads with review of 4 Laws and scripture reading
Each person prays aloud for themselves and others.
One topic is chosen and each person has a turn to speak from their own perspective.
Others *listen* intently with two goals:
Must understand accurately
Must identify failure
Listeners give non-threatening signal when they hear a failure
Speaker must identify which Law was broken, seek forgiveness of God and the person being addressed, then resume communicating
Mom journals solutions, progress for future reference
Session should last no more than 30 minutes
Conclude with prayer

Definitions

Accountability, (noun)

- Responsible to somebody else or to others, or responsible for something.

Appropriateness, (adjective)

- Suitable for the occasion or circumstance.

Commitment, (noun)

- Something that takes up time or energy, especially an obligation.
- Devotion or dedication, for example, to a cause, person or relationship.
- A planned arrangement or activity that cannot be avoided.
- An act of legally confining somebody to prison or a mental health facility.

Compassion, (noun)

- Sympathy for the suffering of others, often including a desire to help.

Consideration, (noun)

- Careful thought or deliberation.
- Thoughtful concern for or sensitivity toward the feelings of others.
- Something to be taken in account when weighing up the pros and cons before making a decision.
- Detailed discussion or scrutiny.
- High regard or esteem.

Courage, (noun)

- The ability to face danger, difficulty, uncertainty, or pain without being overcome by fear or being deflected from chosen course of action.

Discipline, (verb)

- To make yourself act or work in a controlled or regular way.
- To punish somebody because he or she has broken the rules.
- To teach somebody to obey rules or to behave in an ordered or controlled way

Discipline, (noun)

- The practice or methods of ensuring that people obey rules by teaching them to do so and punishing them if they do not.

- A controlled orderly state, especially in a class of schoolchildren.
- The ability to behave in a controlled and calm way even in a difficult or stressful situation.
- Mental self-control used in directing or changing behavior, learning something, or training for something.
- Punishment designed to teach somebody to obey rules.
- The system of rules and punishment used in a particular religious denomination.

Faithful, (adjective)

- Believing firmly in something or somebody, especially a religion.
- Consistently trustworthy and loyal, especially to a person, a promise, or duty.
- Displaying or resulting from a sense of responsibility or devotion to duty.
- Accurate and true.

Gentle, (noun)

- To have a mild and kind nature or manner.
- Using little force or violence.
- Not very steep
- Having a gracious and honorable manner.

Honesty, (noun)

- The quality, condition, or characteristic of being fair, just, truthful, and morally upright.

Honor, (verb)

- To regard with great respect and admiration for somebody or something.
- To recognize somebody publicly or elevate somebody's status officially, usually by giving that person a title or an award.

(Noun)

- Strong moral character or strength, and adherence to ethical principles.
- Great respect and admiration
- Personal dignity that sometimes leads to recognition and glory.

Humility, (noun)

- The quality of being modest or respectful.

Integrity, (noun)

- The quality of possessing and steadfastly adhering to high moral principles or professional standards.

Justice, (noun)

- Fairness or reasonableness, especially in the way people are treated or decisions are made.
- The legal system or the act of applying or upholding the law.
- Validity in law.
- Sound or good reason.
- A judge, especially of a higher court.

Kindness, (noun)

- The practice of being or the capability to be sympathetic and compassionate.
- An act that shows consideration and caring.

Leadership, (noun)

- The office or position of the head of a political party or other body of people.
- The ability to guide, direct, or influence people.
- Guidance or direction.
- A group of leaders.

Love, (verb)

- To feel tender affection for somebody, for example, a close relative or friend, or for something such as a place, an ideal, or an animal.
- To like something or like doing something very much.

(Noun)

- An intense feeling of tender affection and compassion.
- Somebody who is loved romantically.
- A romantic affair possibly sexual.
- Something that elicits deep interest and enthusiasm in somebody
- A score of zero in sports and games, for example, tennis, squash, and whist.

Mercy, (noun)

- Kindness or forgiveness shown to an offender or to somebody a person has power over.
- A disposition to be compassionate or forgiving of others.
- A welcome event or situation that provides relief or prevents something unpleasant from happening.
- The easing of distress or pain.

Patience, (noun)

- The ability to endure waiting or delay without becoming annoyed or upset, or to persevere calmly when faced with difficulties.
- The ability to tolerate being hurt, provoked, or annoyed without complaint or loss of temper.

Punctuality, (noun)

- To arrive or take place at the arranged time.
- Relating to or with the properties of a point in space.

Respect, (verb)

- To feel or show admiration and deference toward somebody or something.
- To pay due attention to and refrain from violating something.
- To show consideration or thoughtfulness in relation to somebody or something.

Responsibility, (noun)

- The state, fact, or position of being accountable to somebody or for something.
- The blame for something that has happened.
- Somebody or something for which a person or organization is responsible.
- Authority to make decisions independently.

Resolve, (verb)

- To come to or cause somebody to come to a firm decision about something.
- To cause something to separate into its constituent elements.
- To find a solution to a problem.

(Noun)

- Firmness of purpose.
- A firm decision to do something.

Self-control, (noun)

- The ability to control your own behavior, especially in terms of reactions and impulses.

Trust, (noun)

- Confidence in and reliance on good qualities, especially fairness, truth, honor, or ability.
- Responsibility for taking good care of somebody or something.
- The position of somebody who is expected by others to behave responsibly or honorably.
- Somebody who or something that people place confidence or faith in.
- Hopeful reliance on what will happen in the future.

(Verb)

- To place confidence in somebody's good qualities, especially fairness, truth, honor, or ability.

APPENDIX B

Steve and Megan Ann Scheibner

CHARACTER MATTERS

Youth Study

The Nine Practices of
Character Healthy Youth

How To Stock the Shelves in
Your Moral Mart

Characterhealth.com

Chapter One

“Beginning With the End in Mind”

The Pillars of making God look great and becoming people that are a blessing to others are found in Matt. 22:36-39:

And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Here Jesus was asked, “What is the greatest commandment?” His response is to quote Deut. 6:5” to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your soul, and all of your might”. However, Jesus doesn’t stop there, to their surprise He takes it a step further and adds, “to love your neighbor as yourself.” He says nothing about self-esteem, self-actualization or even self-awareness. The purpose behind such a statement is to get us to stop thinking about ourselves and to start thinking about God and our fellow man. When it comes to Christian growth, the Bible has a great deal to say about being oriented to the needs of others. Therefore, we are to grow according to this model and reject the humanistic self-focus model.

In order to establish such a practice, two concepts are of primary importance. First, you must determine your personal character goals i.e. beginning with the end in mind (start by writing down any specific *character* goals you want to achieve.) Secondly, you must recognize and reject the wrong models that are keeping you from achieving the goals you just wrote down; while at the same time initiating the right models, which will enable you to reach those goals. This transition is really very easy if you understand the principle of Ephesians 4:22-25. Simply stated,

God wants us to be changing to be more like His Son, by putting off the old man and putting on the new man, as a result of renewed thinking in Christ. Proper parenting is the process of shedding (putting off) the old paradigms and putting on the new paradigms as a result of renewed thinking.

Beginning with the end in mind means that as Godly people we must have an idea of what we want the final result of our lives to look like before we ever begin. It is true that those who aim at nothing hit it every time...so, include yourself in on the changes! You don’t want to make decisions out of the feelings driven needs of the moment rather, you want to live with specific goals in mind. So, let’s do this together.

Establishing the Right Paradigm

Practice #1

The Practice of Modeling

Paradigms

A paradigm is a _____ or road _____ by which we negotiate life. Each of us has many paradigms. We draw upon these tools when we are faced with decisions of a moral nature. Since most of our decisions have a moral consequence we use our paradigms all of the time.

* _____ is the fruit of the wrong paradigm!

What shapes our paradigms?

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

What are some factors that cause our paradigms to change?

-
-
-
-
-

So, now that we know where paradigms come from and what it takes to

change them, it makes sense that we must learn for ourselves what true, lasting change looks like. All change follows a predictable pattern. Whether it be the parent or the child that is changing, both will experience the four phases of change.

4 Phases of a Paradigm Shift

We learned last time that a variety of factors shape our paradigms. Family, friends, and personal tragedy can shape and shift a paradigm in our lives. Some of these changes take a lifetime, while others can happen in an instant. Regardless of how long a paradigm takes to shift, each shift has four things in common. It is important for us to recognize and understand these 4 phases if we ever hope to influence a paradigm swing in our lives.

- 5) _____, Pr 1:7, 22: without a basis of knowledge very little gets accomplished in our lives. There are two basic types of knowledge we deal with on a daily basis.

New: Romans 12:1-2:

Old: James 1:22:

- 6) _____, James 1:23-25, this phase answers the question, "What does it look like?" This is the "Aha!" moment in life where something clicks in our minds. The light bulb comes on! We understand for the first time how something impacts us or another person.
- 7) Applicability or _____, James 4:17: this phase is the action phase. You may discover a new truth about yourself or someone else and never take ownership of that fact. Sadly, many people never do the right thing for lack of courage or simple self-centeredness.
- 8) _____, we are habitual creatures. We thrive on routine and whenever possible we will strive to create a routine where none exists.

Homework:

Make a list of pride issues that are keeping you from taking ownership of change. Pray over that list.

Chapter Two

Becoming A Proactive Person

Practice #2

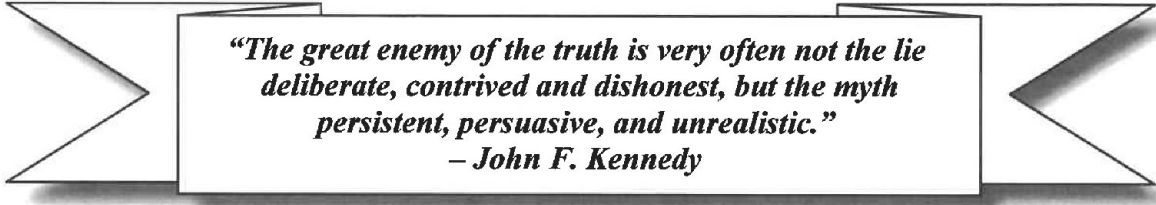
The Practice of Learning to Elevate Virtues Above Feelings

Core Values and Virtues:

Standards of Virtue:

- *Honesty*
- *Integrity*
-

The Motivation Model



*"The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie deliberate, contrived and dishonest, but the myth persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic."
– John F. Kennedy*

The Love of Virtue...or...The Fear of Punishment

- What are most people motivated by?
 - A love of virtue or ... A fear of punishment?
- Why?

****Key concept:***

As a motivator, the _____ of punishment is only as effective as the individual's _____ of virtue!

- Short-range motivators:

- Long-range motivators:

Q. What do you want to motivate your behavior?

Preferring Proactivity...Rejecting Reactivity

Our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions!

-Stephen Covey

Re-active Tree

Pro-active Tree

Highly proactive people do not blame circumstances, conditions, or conditioning for their behavior. Their behavior is a product of their own conscious choices, based on values, rather than a product of their conditions, based on feelings. –Stephen Covey

“Pro” means _____. The proactive person decides to be proactive long before they are faced with a moral dilemma.

We Must Learn to Pre-activity...Our Pro-activity!

Homework:

List three areas where you are highly reactive and list three proactive alternatives to those areas. Start working on owning the change.

Chapter Three

Building Moral Muscle

Practice #3

The Practice of Developing The Moral Memory

The Moral Memory

“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:4-9

God’s word instructs us that the primary training ground for teaching other’s to love God is the family. We are reminded in Deuteronomy 6:7 to be diligent in teaching our children to love God. Do it all of the time we are told...when you sit in your house...when you walk by the way...even when you lie down and rise up again. As your parents encourage you to love God twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, what are you doing to help them? What does it look like to be trained to love God? Simply stated, moms and dads must train their children to develop consistent, God honoring moral memory and you can help!

Developing a Moral Muscle Memory

The moral muscle memory is very much like an athlete’s muscle memory. The best athletes train their muscles to respond in a consistent and predictable manner every time the brain sends a command. The consistently accurate golf swing is developed after much repetition. Hour after hour, day after day the golfer swings the club over and over again, until his brain and body are one. Tiger Woods is such an accomplished golfer

because he has practiced every day of his life, since he was three years old. However, practice and repetition will not produce excellent results unless the athlete is coached properly and refines his technique. Imagine Tiger Woods practicing day after day without the help of a golfer who was older and wiser to coach him. With no one to offer advice and helpful instruction, ultimately Tiger wouldn't be much better than the average golfer. Practice only makes perfect if what we are learning is consistently refined against a standard of perfection. The moral muscle memory, just like physical muscle memory, must be consistently refined against a standard of excellence. Moral excellence is precisely why God tells us to obey His Word 24/7. Surprisingly, your family, not the church is the primary instrument God uses for training your moral muscle memories. Whereas the church must put spiritual meat on the table, the church cannot force you to eat it. Families have been given the unique privilege of being the best place to make moral muscle memories. The church can assist in the process, but it cannot and should not be the only source for moral development. So, leaning on the church youth group or a Sunday-School program to teach us that which they are unwilling to teach ourselves is a cop-out. The end result is a weak and unreliable moral muscle memory. When a moral dilemma presents itself, it is our family's reinforced Bible training that is needed. Moral muscle memory is trained, developed, and perfected at home through consistent parental reinforcement. So, what does a good moral muscle memory look like?

Training a Moral Muscle Memory

I want to clarify one thing at this point. Moral muscle training is not like making vacation memories. Moral muscle training is the consistent, diligent, practice of forming Godly character habits. Moral muscle training, just like physical muscle training, requires repetition, hard work, boatloads of time, and solid Bible study. Just like an athlete trains the body, so we are to train our moral conscience to respond predictably, precisely, and punctually, every time a moral dilemma requires a decision. You may want to think of the moral memory as a sort of fail-safe decision mechanism. Our goal then becomes this, whenever a decision of a moral nature is to be made, the moral conscience defaults to that which is Biblical, instead of that which is carnal, ultimately developing a long term love of virtue. However, this is not an easy process. Jeremiah 17:9 reminds us that our own hearts are deceitful and wicked...in fact, our own hearts will even deceive us. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 26:41 that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Yes indeed, we have a lot of work ahead of us if we are going to train our moral muscle memories properly. However, the job is not **so** overwhelming that we should not attempt the task.

Deut. 6:7, provides a winning strategy for the making of a great moral conscience...just plug away at it day and night. Virtually every moment of every day provides you with some sort of ***moral training opportunity***

Consider this example, what takes place at your home when the phone rings and it is a call you don't want to take? Do you tell your brother or sister to answer and tell the party at the other end that you are not home or do you take the call yourself? The former develops a moral muscle memory that understands the benefits of dishonesty, while the

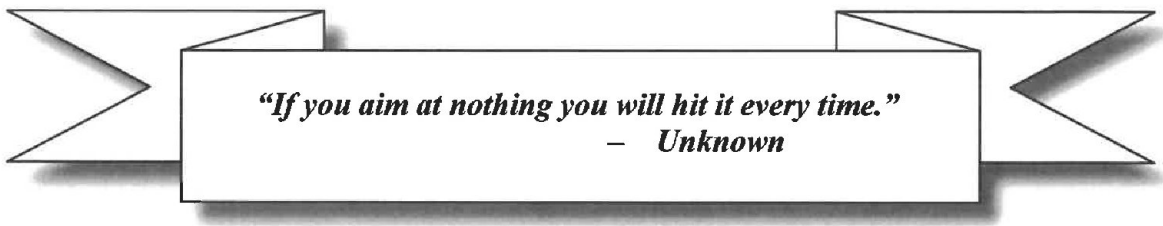
latter develops a moral muscle memory that understands the benefits of integrity and responsibility.

Proverbs 22:6 warns and encourages us at the same time:

“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Every time a moral training opportunity presents itself, we must take that moment to practice our swing. Over and over again, we practice honesty and reject dishonesty. Over and over again, we practice respect and reject disrespect. Over and over again, the moral training goes... until the moral memory is so disciplined that it becomes second nature for us to elevate virtues above feelings.

MORAL★MART



"If you aim at nothing you will hit it every time."
– ***Unknown***

Each one of us is designed to be a moral agent. As a moral agent we possess certain unique and wonderful qualities. Each one has a body, spirit, and emotions. We are bombarded with information about the body (physical), and self esteem (emotional), but we are told the (moral) person does not exist or is not important. As a result, we are drowning in a sea of self-absorption; buried with information, yet longing for wisdom.

What is The MORAL★MART?

The MORAL-MART is that place where decisions are made. It is a type of moral warehouse. Several major decision making components are stored in the moral warehouse. Decisions are produced when:

- The mind (thinking), and
- The heart (feeling), consult
- The conscience (standards of morality) to determine a course of action.

I want you to picture your moral conscience as a giant Wal-Mart store. As you walk through the doors you expect to see a vast warehouse full of all sorts of merchandise on the shelves. Your moral conscience ought to be well stocked with all sorts of high quality virtues and values. Sadly, many of us have poor quality merchandise on the shelves. We have stocked our moral warehouses with inferior quality thinking based on faulty assumptions (paradigms) and feelings-driven reactivity.

The goal is to eliminate the poor quality stuff from the shelves and replace it with the high quality virtuous stuff. So, how do we do that? How do we live proactively and not reactively? How do we upgrade our paradigms? How do we restock our moral warehouse with the high quality virtue stuff, instead of the poor quality "me" stuff? Well, let's begin by looking at the "Decision Depot" model, so that we may gain insight into the decision making process. Once we understand how and why decisions are made, then we can appreciate virtuous decision-making. We must also understand the various lenses through which we view the decision-making process. Decisions are made in only two directions after having been viewed through one of three lenses.

Decision Depot Model

How Thinkers, Feelers, and Doers Make Decisions

Thinkers are prone to _____ obedience.

Feelers are prone to _____ offerings.

Doers are prone to always have a _____ idea.

Teen Scenarios

Scenario #1:

You are invited to an acquaintance's birthday party, you accept. The day of the party you get another invite from your best friend to go to a professional football game as their special guest.

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Scenario #2:

You are on your way out the door to church when you discover that your chores were never completed, although you claimed they were all finished.

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Scenario #3:

Your best friend tells you he/she has met someone in an online chat session and they want to "hook-up" this weekend. Their parents think they are at a sleep over.

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Scenario #4:

You are in the back seat of the car on your way home from church when you overhear your parents loudly criticizing the pastor.

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Youth Scenarios

Scenario #1:

After the morning church service lets out, you are enjoying some fellowship in the lobby when you see a deacon's child running around the AWANA game circle. You want to join him.

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Scenario #2:

For you to participate in the after school program, you must wear sneakers. You think the rule is silly and besides you want to wear your cowboy boots.

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Scenario #3:

The youth choir has been practicing for five weeks, but you did not want to be involved. Now, on the day of the performance, you want to go up front with the other young people.

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Scenario #4:

Your Mom lays out the clothes for the next day. You don't like them. How do you handle the situation?

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Scenario #5:

Your dinner plate is set in front of you but you don't like what is served. What do you do?

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Scenario #6:

You are at your Aunt's house and the dinner plate is set in front of you. You don't like what is being served...what do you do?

- What is the proactive (hard) choice?
- What are the virtues at stake?

Chapter Four

Appropriateness

Practice #4

The Practice of Training

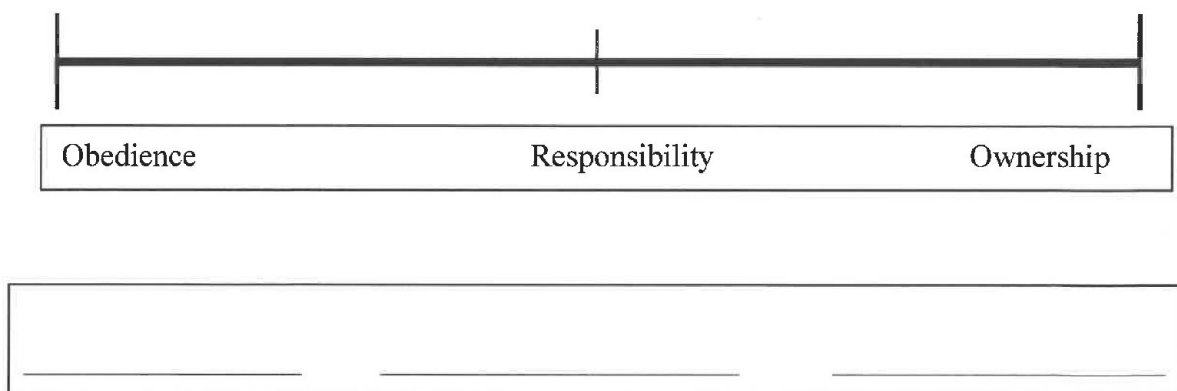
Remembering There's "A Person" Behind It!

***Key Concept:**
Interdependence

Virtue in Action: Responsibility...Compassion...Justice

- *As you mature the quality and quantity of material in your moral warehouse increases, or at least it should. Whether or not to be proactive in stocking your moral conscience is YOUR daily decision. It will take work to do it right. You must get up off of the couch of life and take advantage of each and every **moral training opportunity** that you are handed. If you find yourself frustrated or uncomfortable with your progress, then you must learn to ask the hard questions in life. Stocking your moral shelves is work, but it's not as difficult as you might think. Begin by asking yourself; where am I on the growth continuum? Have I taken ownership of the changes I need to make? If not, what is keeping me from changing? Let's examine together the growth continuum.*

The Growth Continuum



The Training Tree

Planted in _____.

Budding Responsibilities: (in home) _____ focused.

1. Hygiene (teeth, hair, clean clothes, shower or bath)
2. Bedroom (make bed, hang up clothes)
3. Personal (put away toys and books)
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Primary Responsibilities: (in home) _____ focused.

7. Laundry
8. Kitchen chores and cooking duties
9. Mowing lawn
10. Babysitting at home for siblings (no pay)
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.

**Note: All of these responsibilities are related to the family at large and can only be considered successful when you consistently perform the task without parental reminder.*

Secondary Responsibilities: (outside of home) _____ focused.

**Note: Most of us want to skip the budding and primary responsibility phase to get to these responsibilities...the success of Secondary Responsibility depends upon the consistency of the budding and primary responsibilities. Resist the urge to skip to this level without the others.*

6. Babysitting others
7. Holding a job for pay
8. Teaching at Church
9. Serving as a volunteer in the community
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.

Homework:

This week list at least 10 Budding, 10 Primary and 10 Secondary responsibilities. Are any of your responsibilities (priorities) out of order? What needs to change?

- Ready Obedience...Quickly and Completely without Question or Complaint.
- Verbal freedoms
- Physical freedoms
- Moral freedoms
- Inappropriate responsibilities
- Mercy
- Transitional Parenting...moving from authority to trainer to coach, to friend/mentor
- Burnt offering...charming kids...OK vs. Yes Mommy, I'm coming.

Chapter Five

Growing Through Discipline

Practice #5

The Practice of Correction Through Encouragement

Essentially, our behavior falls into one of two category's. The Bible reminds us that our bad behavior is either *foolish* or *childish*, there are no other choices. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Cor. 13:11:

"When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things."

Paul describes childishness to us here as something that will eventually be outgrown. It is in fact, something to be "done away with," as he describes at the end of the verse. Childish behavior is distinctly different from foolish behavior. Notice, what Paul did not say... he did not say...

"When I was a child, I used to speak as a fool, think as a fool, reason as a fool; when I became a man, I did away with foolish things."

Although, children are often foolish, you must learn to distinguish between childish and foolish behavior and correct accordingly. Paul teaches us that childishness is temporary, but foolishness, if allowed to take root, will become permanent. In other words, childishness is only skin-deep but foolishness goes all the way to the bone. Proverbs 22:15 gives us clear instruction regarding our foolishness.

"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him."

Discipline through encouragement seeks to correct childish behavior. So, how do we distinguish childish behavior from foolish behavior?

Simply stated, childish behavior becomes foolish behavior when prior instruction has been clearly and unambiguously given to the child by the parent or appropriate authority. For example, little Johnny spills his milk at the dinner table after placing it too close to the edge of the table. Johnny's mom and dad never instructed him to move the cup to a more secure location. Is this behavior childish or foolish? Clearly,

_____ Now, let's change the example just slightly...Johnny's mom instructs little Johnny about the proper placement of his milk cup and just prior to the meal being served she reminds him to move his cup away from the edge of the table. Johnny disregards his mother's clear and unambiguous instruction and he spills the milk again. Is this childish or foolish behavior?...can you describe the difference? Foolish behavior requires an entirely different reaction than childish behavior. Yet, the first and most important task for the proactive person is to diligently determine the difference between foolishness and childishness. Calling foolishness childishness and vice versa will frustrate you and those around you.

Caution: those of you who are strong in the mercy and compassion areas be careful not to call everything you do childish and those of you who are strong in the authoritative, task oriented areas be careful not to label every behavior foolish.

Simply stated, childish behavior becomes foolish behavior when prior instruction has been clearly and unambiguously given to the child by the parent or appropriate authority.

Homework:

List three areas of foolishness in your life. Write out a prayer of commitment to the Lord regarding those areas.

Chapter Six

The Renewal Model

Practices 6,7,&8...
The Practices of Repentance, Forgiveness and Restoration.

The Restoration Model

Apologizing is a statement of _____ that is obvious to all. Saying "I'm sorry" expresses how you _____ about the situation, but does nothing to address or correct the offense. Remember, we must subordinate feelings to virtues at every opportunity.

Forgiveness on the other hand should be accompanied by an _____ and must include an _____ of wrong doing and a request for forgiveness to the offended party. This allows the offended party to discard the matter all together. Apology alone does not allow the offended party to throw out the offense. No wonder past wrongs linger for so long even after an apology!

5) Knowledge

6) Discovery

7) Ownership

8) Practice

When asking for forgiveness, never attach “Yeah, but” to the end of the statement. You must never qualify it in any way. If you were wrong, you were wrong. Proactive people model excellence in front of the others. ***Remember the re-active person is the one who continually blames others for his problems while the pro-active person takes responsibility for his actions.***

Apology alone is incomplete without asking for forgiveness. In fact, all four steps of the process need to be practiced:



The Restoration Model Statement

A simple statement works best:

➤ Example:

I am sorry for hitting you, will you please forgive me for ...my anger (state the offense). I was wrong!?

I was wrong to yell at you, will you please forgive me for my judgmental spirit?

I should not have taken your toy, I was jealous and coveting, I am sorry will you please forgive me?

Try this tonight!

Expressing forgiveness properly is the first and most important step in healing a hurting relationship.

If we learn to ask for forgiveness when necessary and we understand the importance of the unconditional surrender, we will see *all* of our relationships heal and

thrive as a result. Don't be afraid to ask your parents to forgive you...you will be surprised at how willing they are to forgive and restore.

Asking forgiveness is the right thing to do, it costs us nothing but our pride and the proactive person knows it!

Chapter Seven

Proactive Living in Daily Life

Practice #9 *The Practice of Practice*

What does it look like?

Equipping 'Here Am I' believers...Isa. 6: 6-8

Quickly and Completely Without Question or Complaint.

- Mr. and Mrs.
- Visiting the homes of others
- The Intervention Model

Tools

Dialogue Questions

The dialogue question is a great communication tool. The dialogue question allows you to communicate effectively, while avoiding defensiveness. Just think of the game show...Jeopardy. Each statement by the contestants must be phrased in the form of a question. What, where, when, who, how precede each statement. Instead of saying, "Slow down, you are going to miss your turn," a dialogue question would go like this; "Is this where you wanted to turn?" or "Didn't you want to turn here?"

The charm of the dialogue question is that it eliminates defensiveness by eliminating blunt accusation. We become defensive when others assign a motive to our intentions. We feel judged when someone accuses us and we usually react defensively. To avoid such a reaction, simply phrase what you would like to communicate in the form of a question. This allows the other person to make the desired discovery on their own and it further allows them to take ownership. Work dialogue questions into your vocabulary and watch the defensiveness in your life melt away.

Dialogue Question



Data Gathering ⇒ (Diffuse Defensiveness)



Discovery



Decision

Typical dialogue questions:

- Are you satisfied with how I made my bed?
- Are you happy with my school-work?
- What is the speed limit on this stretch of road?
- Do you want me to hear what you are talking about or would you like me to leave the room?
- I had planned to do my home work, would you rather I sit and talk with you first?
- Can I help you with that or would you rather do it alone?
- Can you think of a kinder way you could have asked me to stop?
- Do you have a job for me or may I go play with my friends?
- What behavior do you expect while the babysitter is here?
- Do you want that job done now or later?

The Intervention Model

How do you deal with real confrontation without becoming a whistle-blower or a tattletale? How do you get someone the help they need, at the time they need it, while still preserving a respect for privacy and confidentiality?

Well, the answer is not as difficult as you might think. Let's look at a three- step structure that is guaranteed to help.

Step #1: Go _____ Them!

Step #2: Go _____ Them!

Step #3: Go _____ Them!

Loving Your Family Guidelines

The loving your family guidelines is a creative and proactive way to teach your family what love looks like. Each day of the week is dedicated to a different characteristic of love such as giving and serving etc.. Use this tool to model love to each member of the family. Create activities around the day's characteristic so as to demonstrate in a real way what love looks like.

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.
(1 John 4:7)

Monday is **Give Day**

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son...
(John 3:16)

Tuesday is **Serve Day**

...by love serve one another. (Gal. 5:13)

Wednesday is **Edify Day**

...charity (love) edifies. (1 Cor. 8:1)

Thursday is **Prefer Day**

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another... (Romans 12:10)

Friday is **Ministry Day**

For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. (Heb. 6:10)

THE FAMILY CONFERENCE TABLE

CONCEPT:

A solution focused communication exercise based on the 4 Laws of Communication (Eph. 4:15-32) utilizing teamwork and personal accountability to help families develop Christ-like communication skills.

TOOLS:

4 Laws on poster Board
Prayer for self and others
Signal for infractions (“time out”, etc)
Repentance, confession, forgiveness for failures
Journal of solutions reached, progress observed

FORMAT:

Anyone may request a conference table
Dad leads with review of 4 Laws and scripture reading
Each person prays aloud for themselves and others.
One topic is chosen and each person has a turn to speak from their own perspective.
Others *listen* intently with two goals:
Must understand accurately
Must identify failure
Listeners give non-threatening signal when they hear a failure
Speaker must identify which Law was broken, seek forgiveness of God and the person being addressed then resume communicating
Mom journals solutions, progress for future reference
Session should last no more than 30 minutes
Conclude with prayer

Definitions

- *The following character qualities and associated scriptures make for a great family devotional time. Teach through this list as a way to reinforce the lessons taught throughout the study.*

Accountability, (noun)

- Responsible to somebody else or to others, or responsible for something.

Scripture: Romans 9:19-22

Jesus Example: John 15

Alert, (adjective)

- Watchful and ready to deal with whatever happens
- Clear headed and responsive

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:5a:

Jesus Example: Luke 8:43-48

Appropriateness, (adjective)

- Suitable for the occasion or circumstance.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:29-30

Jesus Example: Matthew 5:13-16

Carefulness, (noun)

- Caution and attention given to something so as to avoid damage or potential problems
- Painstaking attention to detail

Scripture: Ephesians 5:15

Jesus Example: John 1:3

Commitment, (noun)

- Something that takes up time or energy, especially an obligation.
- Devotion or dedication, for example, to a cause, person or relationship.
- A planned arrangement or activity that cannot be avoided.
- An act of legally confining somebody to prison or a mental health facility.

Scripture: Matthew 8:18-22

Jesus Example: Luke 23:46

Compassion, (noun)

- Sympathy for the suffering of others, often including a desire to help.

Scripture: Colossians 3:12

Jesus Example: Matthew 9:36

Consideration, (noun)

- Careful thought or deliberation.
- Thoughtful concern for or sensitivity toward the feelings of others.
- Something to be taken in account when weighing up the pros and cons before making a decision.
- Detailed discussion or scrutiny.
- High regard or esteem.

Contentment, (noun)

- A feeling of calm and satisfaction
- A circumstance, or a feature or characteristic of something, that gives rise to satisfaction

Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:6

Jesus Example: Matthew 8:20

Courage, (noun)

- The ability to face danger, difficulty, uncertainty, or pain without being overcome by fear or being deflected from chosen course of action.

Scripture: Joshua 1:7a

Jesus Example: Matthew 27:34

Decisive, (adj)

- Settling or ending something, for example, a debate, controversy, or contest
- Showing an ability to make decisions quickly, firmly, and clearly

Scripture: Joshua 24:15

Jesus Example: Matthew 21: 12-13

Diligence, (noun)

- Persistent and hard-working effort in doing something
- The care or attention expected by the law in doing something, such as fulfilling the terms of a contract

Scripture: Proverbs 22:29

Jesus Example: Matthew 26:36

Discernment, (noun)

- Good taste and judgment
- The ability to see things as they really are

Scripture: Hebrews 5:14

Jesus Example: Luke 6: 6-11

Discipline, (verb)

- To make yourself act or work in a controlled or regular way.
- To punish somebody because he or she has broken the rules.
- To teach somebody to obey rules or to behave in an ordered or controlled way

Discipline, (noun)

- The practice or methods of ensuring that people obey rules by teaching them to do so and punishing them if they do not.
- A controlled orderly state, especially in a class of schoolchildren.
- The ability to behave in a controlled and calm way even in a difficult or stressful situation.
- Mental self-control used in directing or changing behavior, learning something, or training for something.
- Punishment designed to teach somebody to obey rules.
- The system of rules and punishment used in a particular religious denomination.

Scripture: Hebrews 12:4-13

Jesus Example: Matthew 4:1-11

Faithful, (adjective)

- Believing firmly in something or somebody, especially a religion.
- Consistently trustworthy and loyal, especially to a person, a promise, or duty.
- Displaying or resulting from a sense of responsibility or devotion to duty.
- Accurate and true.

Scripture: Hebrews 11:1

Jesus Example: Matthew 14:22

Forgiving, (adjective)

- Willing to forgive, especially in most circumstances
- Allowing for or coping well with a degree of imprecision, lack of skill, or other imperfection

Scripture: Luke 17:1-10

Jesus Example: Luke 23:34

Generous, (adj)

- Having or showing a willingness to give money, help, or time freely
- Having or showing nobility or character
- Pleasingly large in size or quantity

Scripture: 2 Corinthians: 9:7

Jesus Example: Matthew 14:15-21

Gentle, (noun)

- To have a mild and kind nature or manner.
- Using little force or violence.
- Not very steep
- Having a gracious and honorable manner.

Scripture: Matthew 5:5

Jesus Example: Matthew 21:5

Honesty, (noun)

- The quality, condition, or characteristic of being fair, just, truthful, and morally upright.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:25

Jesus Example: John 18:5

Honor, (verb)

- To regard with great respect and admiration for somebody or something.
- To recognize somebody publicly or elevate somebody's status officially, usually by giving that person a title or an award.

(Noun)

- Strong moral character or strength, and adherence to ethical principles.
- Great respect and admiration
- Personal dignity that sometimes leads to recognition and glory.

Scripture: Hebrews 12:9

Jesus Example: Luke 11:1-4

Humility, (noun)

- The quality of being modest or respectful.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:19

Jesus Example: John 13:5-17

Integrity, (noun)

- The quality of possessing and steadfastly adhering to high moral principles or professional standards.

Scripture: Psalm 15:1-2

Jesus Example: Luke 20:21-25

Initiative, (noun)

- The ability to act and make decisions without the help or advice of other people
- The first step in a process that, once taken, determines subsequent events
- A plan or strategy designed to deal with a particular problem

Scripture: Proverbs 6:6-8

Jesus Example: John 4:5-38

Hope, (noun)

- A feeling that something desirable is likely to happen
- A chance that somebody wants to have or do or wants to happen or be true
- A feeling of trust

Scripture: Psalm 62:5-6

Jesus Example: John 14:1-6

Justice, (noun)

- Fairness or reasonableness, especially in the way people are treated or decisions are made.
- The legal system or the act of applying or upholding the law.
- Validity in law.
- Sound or good reason.
- A judge, especially of a higher court.

Scripture: Romans 12:19-21

Jesus Example: Revelation 20:11-15

Kindness, (noun)

- The practice of being or the capability to be sympathetic and compassionate.
- An act that shows consideration and caring.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:32

Jesus Example: John 19:25-27

Leadership, (noun)

- The office or position of the head of a political party or other body of people.
- The ability to guide, direct, or influence people.
- Guidance or direction.
- A group of leaders.

Scripture: Acts 5:1-11

Jesus Example: Matthew 4:18-22

Love, (verb)

- To feel tender affection for somebody, for example, a close relative or friend, or for something such as a place, an ideal, or an animal.
- To like something or like doing something very much.

(Noun)

- An intense feeling of tender affection and compassion.
- Somebody who is loved romantically.
- A romantic affair possibly sexual.
- Something that elicits deep interest and enthusiasm in somebody
- A score of zero in sports and games, for example, tennis, squash, and whist.

Scripture: John 15:12

Jesus Example: Mark 10:21

Mercy, (noun)

- Kindness or forgiveness shown to an offender or to somebody a person has power over.
- A disposition to be compassionate or forgiving of others.
- A welcome event or situation that provides relief or prevents something unpleasant from happening.
- The easing of distress or pain.

Scripture: Ephesians 2:4-6

Jesus Example: Matthew 5:7

Patience, (noun)

- The ability to endure waiting or delay without becoming annoyed or upset, or to persevere calmly when faced with difficulties.
- The ability to tolerate being hurt, provoked, or annoyed without complaint or loss of temper.

Scripture: James 5:8

Jesus Example: John 21:15-22

Punctuality, (noun)

- To arrive or take place at the arranged time.
- Relating to or with the properties of a point in space.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:1

Jesus Example: John 11:1-44

Respect, (verb)

- To feel or show admiration and deference toward somebody or something.
- To pay due attention to and refrain from violating something.
- To show consideration or thoughtfulness in relation to somebody or something.

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:18-20

Jesus Example: Matthew 21:33-46

Responsibility, (noun)

- The state, fact, or position of being accountable to somebody or for something.
- The blame for something that has happened.
- Somebody or something for which a person or organization is responsible.
- Authority to make decisions independently.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 4:2

Jesus Example: Matthew: 17:24-27

Resolve, (verb)

- To come to or cause somebody to come to a firm decision about something.
- To cause something to separate into its constituent elements.
- To find a solution to a problem.

(Noun)

- Firmness of purpose.
- A firm decision to do something.

Scripture: 2 Timothy: 4:7

Jesus Example: Luke 5:16-26

Self-control, (noun)

- The ability to control your own behavior, especially in terms of reactions and impulses.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:25a

Jesus Example: Matthew 27:33-50

Trust, (noun)

- Confidence in and reliance on good qualities, especially fairness, truth, honor, or ability.
- Responsibility for taking good care of somebody or something.
- The position of somebody who is expected by others to behave responsibly or honorably.
- Somebody who or something that people place confidence or faith in.
- Hopeful reliance on what will happen in the future.

(Verb)

- To place confidence in somebody's good qualities, especially fairness, truth, honor, or ability.

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6

Jesus Example: John 15

MORAL MEMORY TRAINING EXERCISE

- *From the following list of virtues answer the questions below and assign the virtue or virtues that are impacted by the statement.*

Honesty	Honor	Obedience
Integrity	Courage	Humility
Respect	Commitment	Love
Compassion	Justice	Trust
Consideration	Responsibility	Self-control

Example:

If I ask someone to tell the person on the phone that I am not at home when I am, what virtue (s) do I trample?

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Trust

If the cashier gives me too much change for my purchase and I return it, what virtue (s) do I elevate?

-
-
-
-

If I tell my mom my room is clean when I only shoved my clothes under the bed, what virtue (s) have I trampled?

-
-
-
-

If I tell my brother that he can play with my new toys any time, what virtue (s) am I elevating?

-
-
-

If I call in sick for work when I am not really sick, what virtue (s) am I trampling?

-
-
-
-

If I include my sister when my friend comes over to play, what virtue (s) am I elevating?

-
-
-
-

If I join in laughing when someone is making fun of my brother, what virtue (s) am I trampling?

-
-
-
-

If I borrow my neighbor's car and I return it with a full tank of gas, vacuumed, and washed, what virtue (s) am I elevating?

-
-
-
-

If I stay up late watching a movie, then I am unkind to my family the next morning because I am tired, what virtue (s) am I trampling?

-
-
-
-

Love Languages

Adapted for the book "The Five Love Languages " by Gary Chapman

If you have ever traveled to a foreign country where you did not know the language, it was at best a memorable experience and for most of us a downright frightening encounter. You were certain that trouble lurked behind each corner and each stranger could mean you harm. There was a sense of isolation and adventure. Relationships can be like a trip to foreign soil. It is beautiful to look at in a magazine, but once you arrive, reality sets in. If you don't speak the same language as the other person, the experience can be scary and frustrating. Fortunately for you, there is help. Consider this next lesson to be a sort of Berlitz course in the language of love.

Quite often in our relationships we attempt to demonstrate love only to have it end up in a heap on the floor. Why is that? We have great intentions; yet fall short of the mark. Well, for most of us we don't speak the same language, love language that is! Interpersonal relationships are a lot like being trapped in a land where nobody understands you. Let me explain:

There are Five Love Languages

You may possess any of the following love languages. One of these is your primary language, while the others may be strong but not supreme. Each one of us likes to receive love in the same way we like to display love. The problem arises when our spouses, friends, parents or siblings have a different love language. You try and try to show love, yet it never seems to be appreciated.

Well, that's because you don't speak the same love language! Once you discover your own language then look for the one that best describes the person you are trying to love.

Acts of Service

This individual likes to do things for other people. This person is a natural servant. This person tends to be neat and well organized. You won't find burned out lights in this house, nor will you find a great deal of affection. Organization and structure are a characteristic of a servant. Typically, the person with this love language will come through the door after work or shopping with arms full. Each item will be put neatly away before anyone is greeted. Going to the garage to fetch a simple item can turn into a long chore, as the servant has an eye for things that need to be done. If a light bulb is burned out he/she will stop to fix it and while they are there they might as well take out the garbage and tidy up the slipcovers on the van seats. Get the picture? Each and every chore accomplished is an act of love by doing things for others.

Quality Time

This person likes to spend time together over coffee or tea discussing interpersonal relationships. It is not enough to just be together, the quality time individual wants to know if you are as interested in them as they are in you. The time spent together must be of high quality. You must share each other's undivided attention. Quality time is spent on the couch or at dinner in a nice restaurant, always in stimulating conversations. Quality time is not sitting together on the couch watching a football game (usually). It may be spent watching a movie as long as the time is uninterrupted by children or tasks. A quality time person wants to know, that they are special and desired.

Words of Encouragement

This individual loves to give encouraging cards or letters. They will rarely miss a birthday or a special occasion when some encouraging note can be sent. They are always looking for ways to praise others. They often think they do not measure up to others. Their countenance lights up when praised. They may display around the house any valuable notes or cards they have received from others. They seek those who need encouragement, when the rest of us are clueless.

Gift Giving

The gift giver really lives to buy and distribute gifts to anyone they have a relationship with. This is different than the encourager who only gives verbal or written gifts. The language of gift giving will usually seek to give a useful gift to someone, for no special reason. Gift giving at the holidays and special occasions is mandatory. However, the true gift giver will give regardless of an occasion or not. They love receiving thoughtful gifts. It lets them know they are loved. The gift giver would rather spend money on a , than put it in the bank. We all like to give and receive gifts, but the gift giver goes up and above the norm in this area.

Physical Touch and Closeness

This love language is fairly obvious. This individual loves to hug and hold hands. They will touch strangers. They love to put a hand on your knee while you are talking. They may not even realize, that they are doing it. This is not a sexual type of touch; rather it is more of a continual reassurance touching. The husband who loves to hug in the kitchen during meal preparations is a typical example. These people love back rubs and foot rubs, etc... The closeness part of the language is similar to quality time yet there is a subtle difference. Closeness means just being together. A wife may ask her husband to sit in the same room with her while they both read separate books. No conversation is required, unlike quality time. The child who always wants to be near by or in the same

room with adults, just listening to them, fits the closeness language. Servants find all the hugging and time spent doing nothing together annoying. Affection and touch are very important to this love language.

Now that we have described these various love languages you are probably drawing a picture in your mind of which is your love language and which is your future or present spouse's. One love language will be primary, although you may have another that is very strong, and it is usually easy to pick the one that is most definitely not you. For instance, if you love hugs and kisses and back rubs and wish you could get more of them, then your language is most likely that of physical touch and closeness. If you love to do things for people or you find yourself the person who continually takes on tasks that others don't volunteer to do, then your language is probably acts of service. If you just wish people would stop invading your personal space and you could go for the rest of your life without the obligatory hugging and kissing that goes on when the neighbors come through the door for dinner, then your language is not physical touch. If you receive gifts and think how to get rid of them rather than how to display them your language is most definitely not gift giving. And so it goes.

Now, I want to remind you to do a very important exercise. Take some time and write out your love languages in order from strongest to weakest. A space is provided below for this exercise. After you have identified your own, identify those of your future/present spouse. Also, write those out below. Once you have identified your language and that of your spouse you will gain a new appreciation for that person and possess an invaluable insight into them. You are now armed with the ability to love them in a language they understand and to identify love overtures from them that miss your languages, yet are significant to them on your behalf. **If you can learn to speak the other person's language it will set your relationship free!** Invest some time now in writing out then discussing with your future/present spouse your language and theirs. Examine how closely your lists match. Discuss how you can better display love in a way that is significant to the other person. When the Lord commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves, I believe this is exactly what He had in mind. Enjoy!

Determine Your Love Language Take the Love Language Test

Designed by Gary and Joy Hanson

Do you know each family member's love language? Here is an exercise that we want you and your kids to try. Within each group, rate the sentence 1-5 according to what would make you feel most appreciated and loved by your spouse, children, or parents. The number 5 represents what you most appreciate; number 1, in contrast, is what you least appreciate, in each group (no individual grouping may have a number repeated twice). Please note that some questions distinguish between male and female. Answer those appropriately, according to your gender and position in the family.

Group One

- A_____ Your spouse/child says, "You really did a great job on that. I appreciate it."
- B_____ Your spouse/child unexpectedly does something in or around the house or your room that you appreciate.
- C_____ Your spouse/child brings you home a surprise treat from the store.
- D_____ Your spouse/child invites you to go on a leisurely walk just to chat.
- E_____ Your spouse/child makes a point to embrace and kiss you before leaving the house.

Group Two

- A_____ Your spouse/child tells you how much he or she appreciates you.
- B_____ Your spouse/child (male) volunteers to do the dishes and encourages you to relax. Your spouse/child (female) volunteers to wash your car and encourages you to relax.

C____ Your spouse/child (male) brings you flowers, just because he cares. Your spouse/child (female) brings you home a special food treat from the local bakery.

D____ Your spouse/child invites you to sit down and talk about your day.

E____ Your spouse/child gives you a hug when your just passing by room to room.

Group Three

A____ Your spouse/child during a party shares about a recent success you had.

B____ Your spouse/child cleans out your car.

C____ Your spouse/child surprises you with an unexpected gift.

D____ You spouse/child surprises you with a special afternoon trip.

E____ Your spouse holds your hand as you walk through the mall or your child/parent stands by your side with an arm around your shoulder at a public event.

Group Four

A____ Your spouse/child praises you about one of your special qualities.

B____ Your spouse/child brings you breakfast in bed.

C____ Your spouse/child surprises you with a membership to something you've always wanted.

D____ Your spouse/child plans a special night out for the two of you.

E____ Your spouse/child will personally drive you to an event instead of having to go on the old, crowded bus with the team.

Group Five

A_____ Your spouse/child tells you how much his or her friends appreciate you.

B_____ Your spouse/child takes time to fill out the long complicated applications that you had hoped to get to this evening.

C_____ Your spouse/child sends you something special through the mail.

D_____ Your spouse/child kidnaps you for lunch and takes you to your favorite restaurant.

E_____ Your spouse/child gives you a massage.

Go on to the score sheet on the next page.

Transfer your scores from your test questions to this scoring profile.

	Encouraging Words	Acts of Service	Gift-Giving	Quality Time	Touch
Group 1	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 2	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 3	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 4	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 5	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Totals	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____

Key Principle: Every day we choose to love, and every day we choose not to love.

Touchpoints of Love for Your Children

Designed by Gary and Joy Hanson

Do you know each family member's love language? Here is an exercise that we want you and your kids to try. Within each group, rate the sentence 1-5 according to what would make you feel most appreciated and loved by your spouse, children, or parents. The number 5 represents what you most appreciate; number 1, in contrast, is what you least appreciate, in each group (no individual grouping may have a number repeated twice).

Group One

- A_____ Mom or Dad says, "You really did a great job on that. I appreciate it."
- B_____ Mom or Dad unexpectedly does something in or around the house or your room that you appreciate.
- C_____ Mom or Dad brings you home a surprise treat from the store.
- D_____ Mom or Dad invites you to go on a leisurely walk just to chat.
- E_____ Mom or Dad makes a point to embrace and kiss you before leaving the house.

Group Two

- A_____ Mom or Dad tells you how much he or she appreciates you.
- B_____ Mom or Dad volunteers to type your homework so you won't have to.
- C_____ Mom or Dad brings you home a special food treat from the local bakery.
- D_____ Mom or Dad invites you to sit down and talk about your day.
- E_____ Mom or Dad gives you a hug when your just passing by room to room.

Group Three

A_____ Mom or Dad during a party shares about the great grades you got in school.

B_____ Mom or Dad helps pick up your room.

C_____ Mom or Dad surprises you with a present you didn't know you were going to get.

D_____ Mom or Dad surprises you with a special afternoon trip.

E_____ Mom or Dad holds your hand as you walk through the mall or your stands by your side with an arm around your shoulder at a public event.

Group Four

A_____ Mom or Dad praises you about one of your special abilities.

B_____ Mom or Dad brings you breakfast in bed.

C_____ Mom or Dad surprises you with a book you've always wanted.

D_____ Mom or Dad plans a special night out for the two of you.

E_____ Mom or Dad will personally drive you to an event instead of having to go on the old, crowded bus with the team.

Group Five

A_____ Mom or Dad tells you how much his or her friends appreciate you.

B_____ Mom or Dad takes time to fill out the long forms for school that you thought you were going to have to fill out yourself.

C_____ Mom or Dad sends you something special through the mail.

D_____ Mom or Dad kidnaps you for lunch and takes you to your favorite restaurant.

E_____ Mom or Dad gives you a back rub.

Go on to the score sheet on the next page.
Transfer your scores from your test questions to this scoring profile.

	Encouraging Words	Acts of Service	Gift-Giving	Quality Time	Touch
Group 1	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 2	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 3	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 4	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Group 5	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____
Totals	A_____	B_____	C_____	D_____	E_____

Key Principle: Every day we choose to love, and every day we choose not to love.

Compare your score with your parent.

Yours:

Your Mom:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Brother _____

Dad _____

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Sister _____

Aunt

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Uncle _____

Friend

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

APPENDIX C

Parenting Matters Follow-up research (Questionnaire)

Name (s) (Age) _____

Married Yes or No (Circle)

If married, how long? _____

List # of children and gender:

Example: Daughter 7, Son 12

Please write out your answers to the following questions. If you need extra space to write out your answer please use the blank pages included at the end of this questionnaire.

1) As a parent, describe your role in the biblical theological character development of your children.

2) Please write out your thoughts on the following question: Do children naturally develop moral character through daily life experience? Explain.

3) Why is the moral character development of your children important? Explain.

4) What Biblical principles are necessary for the proper moral development of your children? Explain.

5) What role do encouragement and discipline play in the intentional formation of character? Explain.

6) How can the church best equip parents to raise morally competent children? Describe.

Your additional thoughts:

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VITA

Steve was born Oct. 21st 1960 in Royal Oak, Michigan. Steve graduated from Unionville High School in 1978. He earned a B.S. in Economics from West Chester University in 1982. Upon graduation, he joined the U.S. Navy and was commissioned and trained as a pilot in 1983-84. He married his college sweetheart Megan, in July of 1984 and they began a life together that to date, has included eight children and 15 moves.

During the late 90's, Steve started his graduate education at Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary in Lansdale PA. He was awarded a Master of Arts in Theological Studies in 2006 and a Master of Arts in Christian Ministries in 2007. Steve has been a student in the DMin program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary for three years and is currently writing his Doctor of Ministry thesis project, with an expected graduation date of May, 2011. In July of 2000, Steve founded Cornerstone Baptist Church of Topsham, ME.

Steve and Megan are instrumental in the lives of young parents. They have developed a parenting course entitled Parenting Matters; The Nine Practices of The Proactive Parent. They travel extensively, teaching weekend parenting seminars. He is also the author of several books and studies.

Steve is currently a Commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve and a First Officer for American Airlines. He recently retired as Senior Pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church of Topsham, ME. to become the President of Characterhealth Corporation; a non-profit conference ministry aimed at equipping parents to train the next generation of character-healthy leaders.